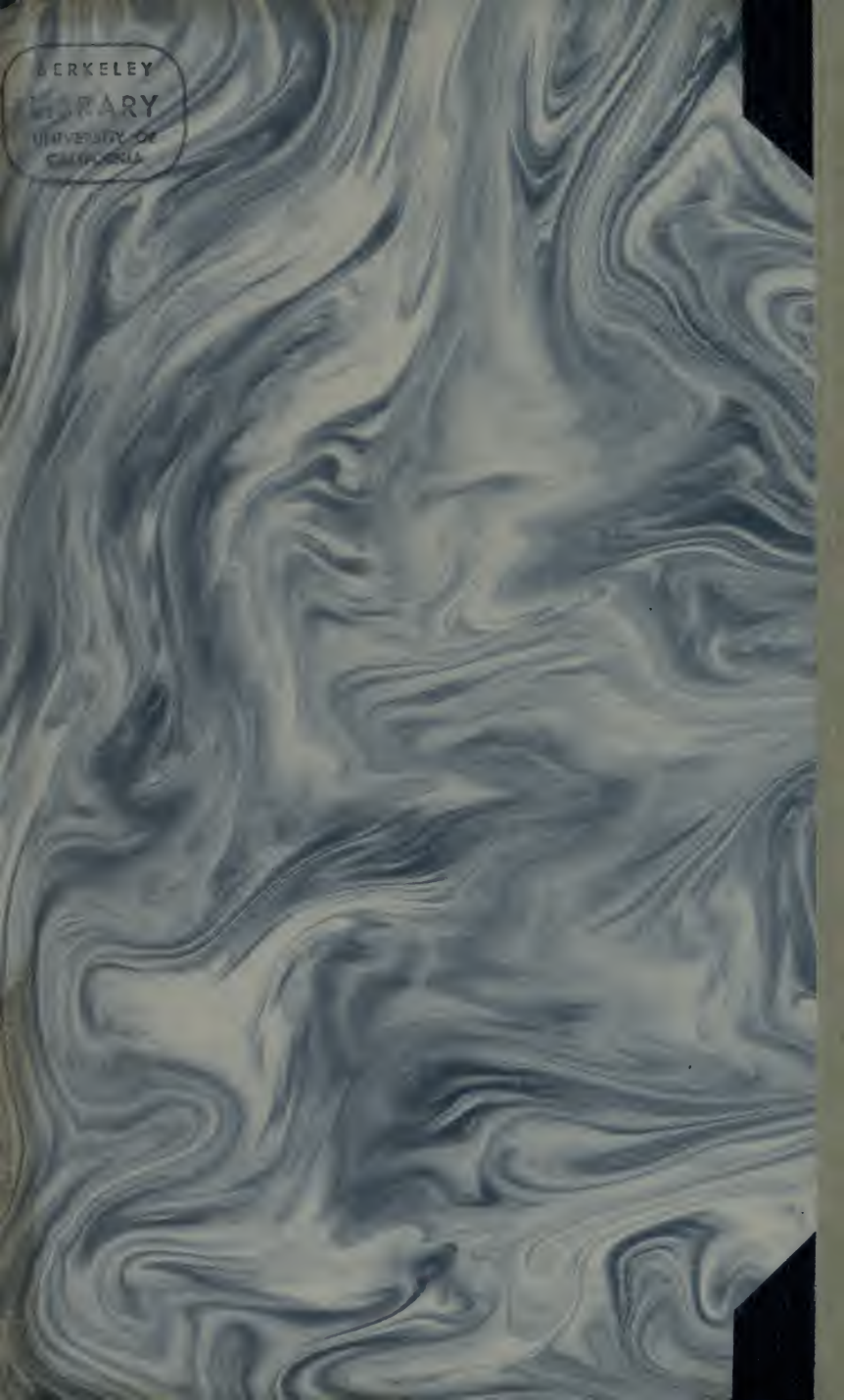
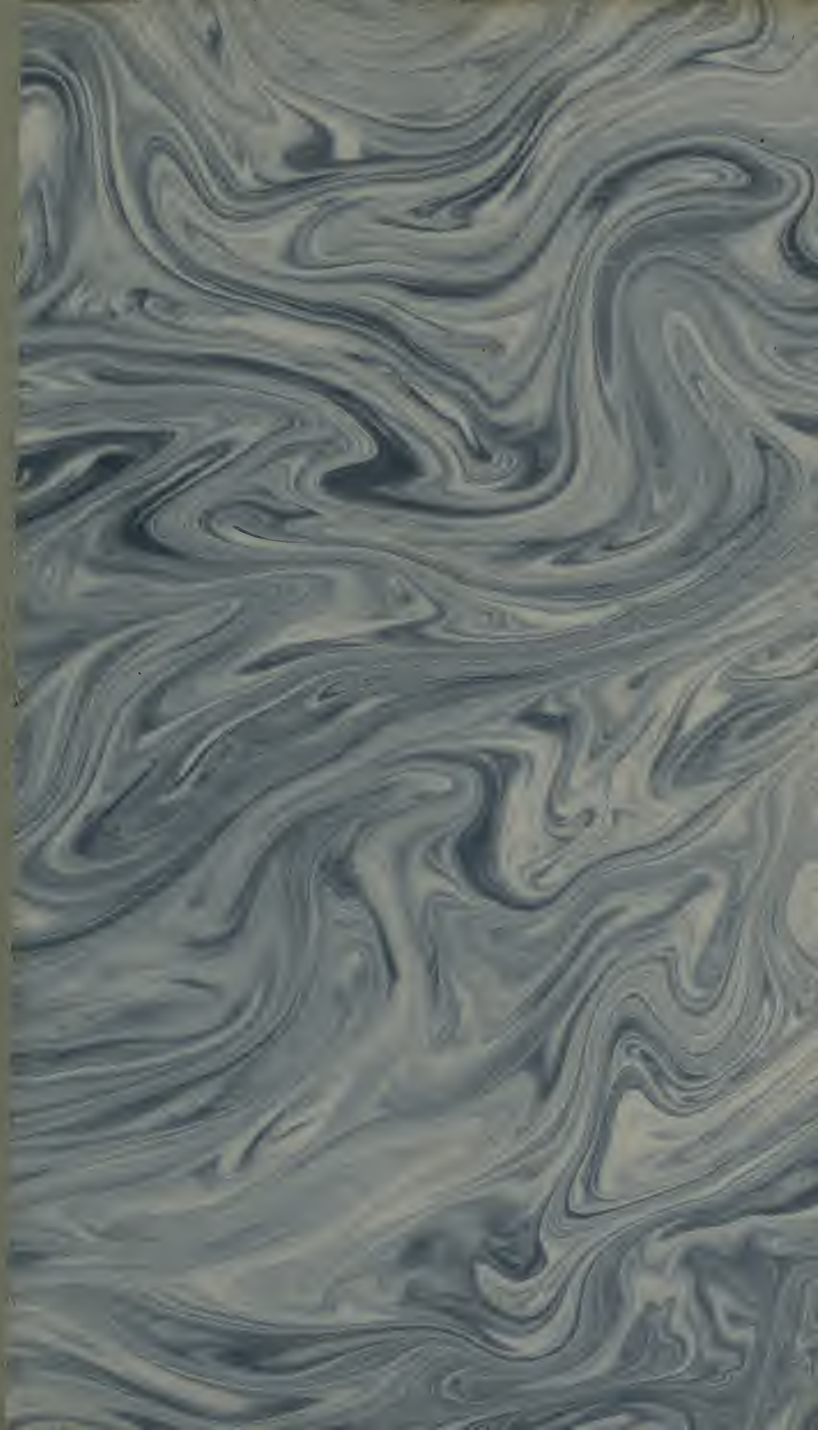




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Maud

from Betty.

31<sup>st</sup> Jan 1908.

Page 51.



THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
JEAN INGELOW







Jean Lyell



# THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

JEAN INGELOW

IN ONE VOLUME

*WITH A PORTRAIT*

NEW IMPRESSION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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*DIVIDED.*

I

**A**N empty sky, a world of heather,  
Purple of foxglove, yellow of broom ;  
We two among them wading together,  
Shaking out honey, treading perfume.

Crowds of bees are giddy with clover,  
Crowds of grasshoppers skip at our feet,  
Crowds of larks at their matins hang over,  
Thanking the Lord for a life so sweet.

Flusheth the rise with her purple favour,  
Gloweth the cleft with her golden ring,  
'Twixt the two brown butterflies waver,  
Lightly settle, and sleepily swing.

We two walk till the purple dieth  
And short dry grass under foot is brown ;  
But one little streak at a distance lieth  
Green like a ribbon to prank the down.

B

## II

Over the grass we stepped unto it,  
And God He knoweth how blithe we were !  
Never a voice to bid us eschew it :  
Hey the green ribbon that showed so fair !

Hey the green ribbon ! we kneeled beside it,  
We parted the grasses dewy and sheen ;  
Drop over drop there filtered and slid  
A tiny bright beck that trickled between.

Tinkle, tinkle, sweetly it sang to us,  
Light was our talk as of faëry bells—  
Faëry wedding-bells faintly rung to us  
Down in their fortunate parallels.

Hand in hand, while the sun peered over,  
We lapped the grass on that youngling spring ;  
Swept back its rushes, smoothed its clover,  
And said, ' Let us follow it westering.'

## III

A dappled sky, a world of meadows,  
Circling above us the black rooks fly  
Forward, backward ; lo, their dark shadows  
Flit on the blossoming tapestry—



Flit on the beck, for her long grass parteth  
As hair from a maid's bright eyes blown back ;  
And, lo, the sun like a lover darteth  
His flattering smile on her wayward track.

Sing on ! we sing in the glorious weather  
Till one steps over the tiny strand,  
So narrow, in sooth, that still together  
On either brink we go hand in hand.

The beck grows wider, the hands must sever.  
On either margin, our songs all done,  
We move apart, while she singeth ever,  
Taking the course of the stooping sun.

He prays, ' Come over '—I may not follow ;  
I cry, ' Return '—but he cannot come :  
We speak, we laugh, but with voices hollow ;  
Our hands are hanging, our hearts are numb.

## IV

A breathing sigh, a sigh for answer,  
A little talking of outward-things :  
The careless beck is a merry dancer,  
Keeping sweet time to the air she sings.

A little pain when the beck grows wider ;  
 'Cross to me now—for her wavelets swell :'  
 'I may not cross'—and the voice beside her  
 Faintly reacheth, though heeded well.

No backward path ; ah ! no returning ;  
 No second crossing that ripple's flow :  
 'Come to me now, for the west is burning ;  
 Come ere it darkens ;'—'Ah, no ! ah, no !'

Then cries of pain, and arms outreaching—  
 The beck grows wider and swift and deep :  
 Passionate words as of one beseeching—  
 The loud beck drowns them ; we walk, and weep.

## v

A yellow moon in splendour drooping,  
 A tired queen with her state oppressed,  
 Low by rushes and swordgrass stooping,  
 Lies she soft on the waves at rest.

The desert heavens have felt her sadness ;  
 Her earth will weep her some dewy tears ;  
 The wild beck ends her tune of gladness,  
 And goeth stilly as soul that fears.

---

We two walk on in our grassy places  
On either marge of the moonlit flood,  
With the moon's own sadness in our faces,  
Where joy is withered, blossom and bud.

## VI

A shady freshness, chafers whirring,  
A little piping of leaf-hid birds ;  
A flutter of wings, a fitful stirring,  
A cloud to the eastward snowy as curds.

Bare grassy slopes, where kids are tethered ;  
Round valleys like nests all fern-y-lined ;  
Round hills, with fluttering tree-tops feathered,  
Swell high in their freckled robes behind.

A rose-flush tender, a thrill, a quiver,  
When golden gleams to the tree-tops glide ;  
A flashing edge for the milk-white river,  
The beck, a river—with still sleek tide.

Broad and white, and polished as silver,  
On she goes under fruit-laden trees ;  
Sunk in leafage cooeth the culver,  
And 'plaineth of love's disloyalties.

Glitters the dew and shines the river,  
Up comes the lily and dries her bell ;  
But two are walking apart for ever,  
And wave their hands for a mute farewell.

## VII

A braver swell, a swifter sliding ;  
The river hasteth, her banks recede :  
Wing-like sails on her bosom gliding  
Bear down the lily and drown the reed.

Stately prows are rising and bowing  
(Shouts of mariners winnow the air),  
And level sands for banks endowing  
The tiny green ribbon that showed so fair.

While, O my heart ! as white sails shiver,  
And crowds are passing, and banks stretch wide,  
How hard to follow, with lips that quiver,  
That moving speck on the far-off side !

Farther, farther—I see it—know it—  
My eyes brim over, it melts away :  
Only my heart to my heart shall show it  
As I walk desolate day by day.

## VIII

And yet I know past all doubting, truly—  
A knowledge greater than grief can dim—  
I know, as he loved, he will love me duly—  
Yea, better—e'en better than I love him.

And as I walk by the vast calm river,  
The awful river so dread to see,  
I say, 'Thy breadth and thy depth for ever  
Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me.'





*HONOURS—PART I.*

*A Scholar is musing on his want of success.*

**T***O strive—and fail. Yes, I did strive and fail  
I set mine eyes upon a certain night  
To find a certain star—and could not hail  
With them its deep-set light.*

*Fool that I was ! I will rehearse my fault :  
I, wingless, thought myself on high to lift  
Among the winged—I set these feet that halt  
To run against the swift.*

*And yet this man, that loved me so, can write—  
That loves me, I would say, can let me see ;  
Or fain would have me think he counts but light  
These Honours lost to me.*

[*The letter of his friend.*]

‘What are they? that old house of yours which gave  
Such welcome oft to me, the sunbeams fall



---

Yet, down the squares of blue and white which pave  
Its hospitable hall.

‘A brave old house ! a garden full of bees,  
Large dropping poppies, and Queen hollihocks,  
With butterflies for crowns—tree peonies  
And pinks and goldilocks.

‘Go, when the shadow of your house is long  
Upon the garden—when some new-waked bird,  
Pecking and fluttering, chirps a sudden song,  
And not a leaf is stirred ;

‘But every one drops dew from either edge  
Upon its fellow, while an amber ray  
Slants up among the tree-tops like a wedge  
Of liquid gold—to play

‘Over and under them, and so to fall  
Upon that lane of water lying below—  
That piece of sky let in, that you do call  
A pond, but which I know

‘To be a deep and wondrous world ; for I  
Have seen the trees within it—marvellous things  
So thick no bird betwixt their leaves could fly  
But she would smite her wings ;—

‘Go there, I say ; stand at the water’s brink,  
And shoals of spotted grayling you shall see  
Basking between the shadows—look, and think  
“This beauty is for me ;

“For me this freshness in the morning hours,  
For me the water’s clear tranquillity ;  
For me the soft descent of chestnut flowers ;  
The cushat’s cry for me.

“The lovely laughter of the wind-swayed wheat ;  
The easy slope of yonder pastoral hill ;  
The sedgy brook whereby the red kine meet  
And wade and drink their fill.”

‘Then saunter down that terrace whence the sea  
All fair with wing-like sails you may discern ;  
Be glad, and say “This beauty is for me—  
A thing to love and learn.

“For me the bounding in of tides ; for me  
The laying bare of sands when they retreat ;  
The purple flush of calms, the sparkling glee  
When waves and sunshine meet.”

‘So, after gazing, homeward turn, and mount  
To that long chamber in the roof ; there tell  
Your heart the laid-up lore it holds to count  
And prize and ponder well.

- ‘The lookings onward of the race before  
It had a past to make it look behind ;  
Its reverent wonder, and its doubting sore,  
Its adoration blind.
- ‘The thunder of its war-songs, and the glow  
Of chants to freedom by the old world sung ;  
The sweet love cadences that long ago  
Dropped from the old-world tongue.
- ‘And then this new-world lore that takes account  
Of tangled star-dust ; maps the triple whirl  
Of blue and red and argent worlds that mount  
And greet the IRISH EARL ;
- ‘Or float across the tube that HERSCHEL sways,  
Like pale-rose chaplets, or like sapphire mist ;  
Or hang or droop along the heavenly ways,  
Like scarves of amethyst.
- ‘O strange it is and wide the new-world lore,  
For next it treateth of our native dust !  
Must dig out buried monsters, and explore  
The green earth’s fruitful crust ;
- ‘Must write the story of her seething youth—  
How lizards paddled in her lukewarm seas ;  
Must show the cones she ripened, and forsooth  
Count seasons on her trees ;

- ‘ Must know her weight, and pry into her age,  
    Count her old beach lines by their tidal swell ;  
Her sunken mountains name, her craters gauge,  
    Her cold volcanoes tell ;
- ‘ And treat her as a ball, that one might pass  
    From this hand to the other—such a ball  
As he could measure with a blade of grass,  
    And say it was but small !
- ‘ Honours ! O friend, I pray you bear with me :  
    The grass hath time to grow in meadow lands,  
And leisurely the opal murmuring sea  
    Breaks on her yellow sands ;
- ‘ And leisurely the ring-dove on her nest  
    Broods till her tender chick will peck the shell ;  
And leisurely down fall from ferny crest  
    The dew-drops on the well ;
- ‘ And leisurely your life and spirit grew,  
    With yet the time to grow and ripen free :  
No judgment past withdraws that boon from you,  
    Nor granteth it to me.
- ‘ Still must I plod, and still in cities moil ;  
    From precious leisure, learned leisure far,  
Dull my best self with handling common soil ;  
    Yet mine those honours are.

- ‘ Mine they are called ; they are a name which means,  
 “ This man had steady pulses, tranquil nerves ;  
 Here, as in other fields, the most he gleans  
     Who works and never swerves.
- ‘ “ We measure not his mind ; we cannot tell  
     What lieth under, over, or beside  
 The test we put him to ; he doth excel,  
     We know, where he is tried ;
- ‘ “ But, if he boast some farther excellence—  
     Mind to create as well as to attain ;  
 To sway his peers by golden eloquence,  
     As wind doth shift a fane ;
- ‘ “ To sing among the poets—we are nought :  
     We cannot drop a line into that sea  
 And read its fathoms off, nor gauge a thought,  
     Nor map a simile.
- ‘ “ It may be of all voices sublunar  
     The only one he echoes we did try ;  
 We may have come upon the only star  
     That twinkles in his sky.”
- ‘ And so it was with me.’

*O false my friend !*

*False, false, a random charge, a blame undue ;  
 Wrest not fair reasoning to a crooked end :  
 False, false, as you are true !*

*But I read on :* ‘ And so it was with me ;  
Your golden constellations lying apart  
They neither hailed nor greeted heartily,  
Nor noted on their chart.

‘ And yet to you and not to me belong  
Those finer instincts that, like second sight  
And hearing, catch creation’s undersong,  
And see by inner light.

‘ You are a well, whereon I, gazing, see  
Reflections of the upper heavens—a well  
From whence come deep, deep echoes up to me—  
Some underwave’s low swell.

‘ I cannot soar into the heights you show,  
Nor dive among the deeps that you reveal ;  
But it is much that high things ARE to know,  
That deep things ARE to feel.

‘Tis yours, not mine, to pluck out of your breast  
Some human truth, whose workings recondite  
Were unattired in words, and manifest  
And hold it forth to light

‘ And cry, “ Behold this thing that I have found.”  
And though they knew not of it till that day,  
Nor should have done with no man to expound  
Its meaning, yet they say,



- 
- ‘“We do accept it : lower than the shoals  
We skim, this diver went, nor did create,  
But find it for us deeper in our souls  
Than we can penetrate.”
- ‘ You were to me the world’s interpreter,  
The man that taught me Nature’s unknown tongue,  
And to the notes of her wild dulcimer  
First set sweet words and sung.
- ‘ And what am I to you? A steady hand  
To hold, a steadfast heart to trust withal ;  
Merely a man that loves you, and will stand  
By you, whate’er befall.
- ‘ But need we praise his tendance tutelar  
Who feeds a flame that warms him? Yet ’tis true  
I love you for the sake of what you are,  
And not of what you do :—
- ‘ As heaven’s high twins, whereof in Tyrian blue  
The one revolveth : through his course immense  
Might love his fellow of the damask hue,  
For like, and difference.
- ‘ For different pathways evermore decreed  
To intersect, but not to interfere ;  
For common goal, two aspects, and one speed,  
One centre and one year ;

‘ For deep affinities, for drawings strong,  
 That by their nature each must needs exert ;  
 For loved alliance, and for union long,  
 That stands before desert.

And yet desert makes brighter not the less,  
 For nearest his own star he shall not fail  
 To think those rays unmatched for nobleness,  
 That distance counts but pale.

‘ Be pale afar, since still to me you shine,  
 And must while Nature’s eldest law shall hold ;’—  
*Ah, there’s the thought which makes his random line  
 Dear as refined gold !*

*Then shall I drink this draught of oxymel,  
 Part sweet, part sharp ? Myself o’erprized to know  
 Is sharp ; the cause is sweet, and truth to tell  
 Few would that cause forego,*

*Which is, that this of all the men on earth  
 Doth love me well enough to count me great—  
 To think my soul and his of equal girth—  
 O liberal estimate !*

*And yet it is so ; he is bound to me,  
 For human love makes aliens near of kin :  
 By it I rise, there is equality :  
 I rise to thee, my twin.*

'Take courage'—*courage! ay, my purple peer,  
I will take courage; for thy Tyrian rays  
Refresh me to the heart, and strangely dear  
And healing is thy praise.*

'Take courage,' *quoth he,* 'and respect the mind  
Your Maker gave, for good your fate fulfill;  
The fate round many hearts your own to wind.'  
*Twin soul, I will! I will!*





*HONOURS—PART II.*

*The Answer.*



AS one who, journeying, checks the rein in haste  
Because a chasm doth yawn across his way  
Too wide for leaping, and too steeply faced  
For climber to essay—

As such an one, being brought to sudden stand,  
Doubts all his foregone path if 't were the true,  
And turns to this and then to the other hand  
As knowing not what to do,—

So I, being checked, am with my path at strife  
Which led to such a chasm, and there doth end.  
False path ! it cost me priceless years of life,  
My well-beloved friend.

There fell a flute when Ganymede went up—  
The flute that he was wont to play upon :  
It dropped beside the jonquil's milk-white cup,  
And freckled cowslips wan—

Dropped from his heedless hand when, dazed and mute,  
He sailed upon the eagle's quivering wing,  
Aspiring, panting—ay, it dropped—the flute  
Erewhile a cherished thing.

Among the delicate grasses and the bells  
Of crocuses that spotted a rill side,  
I picked up such a flute, and its clear swells  
To my young lips replied.

I played thereon, and its response was sweet ;  
But lo, they took from me that solacing reed.  
'O shame !' they said ; ' such music is not meet ;  
Go up like Ganymede.

' Go up, despise these humble grassy things,  
Sit on the golden edge of yonder cloud.'  
Alas ! though ne'er for me those eagle wings  
Stooped from their eyrie proud.

My flute ! and flung away its echoes sleep ;  
But as for me, my life-pulse beateth low :  
And like a last-year's leaf enshrouded deep  
Under the drifting snow,

Or like some vessel wrecked upon the sand  
Of torrid swamps, with all her merchandise,  
And left to rot betwixt the sea and land,  
My helpless spirit lies.

Rueing, I think for what then was I made ;  
What end appointed for—what use designed ?  
Now let me right this heart that was bewrayed—  
Unveil these eyes gone blind.

My well-beloved friend, at noon to-day  
Over our cliffs a white mist lay unfurled,  
So thick, one standing on their brink might say.  
Lo, here doth end the world.

A white abyss beneath, and nought beside ;  
Yet, hark ! a cropping sound not ten feet down :  
Soon I could trace some browsing lambs that hied  
Through rock-paths cleft and brown.

And here and there green tufts of grass peered through,  
Salt lavender, and sea thrift ; then behold,  
The mist, subsiding ever, bared to view  
A beast of giant mould.

She seemed a great sea monster lying content  
With all her cubs about her : but deep—deep—  
The subtle mist went floating ; its descent  
Showed the world's end was steep.

It shook, it melted, shaking more, till, lo,  
The sprawling monster was a rock ; her brood  
Were boulders, whereon seamews white as snow  
Sat watching for their food.

Then once again it sank, its day was done :  
Part rolled away, part vanished utterly,  
And glimmering softly under the white sun,  
Behold ! a great white sea.

O that the mist which veileth my To-come  
Would so dissolve and yield unto mine eyes  
A worthy path ! I'd count not wearisome  
Long toil, nor enterprise,

But strain to reach it ; ay, with wrestlings stout  
And hopes that even in the dark will grow  
(Like plants in dungeons, reaching feelers out)  
And ploddings wary and slow.

Is there such path already made to fit  
The measure of my foot? It shall atone  
For much, if I at length may light on it  
And know it for mine own.

But is there none? why, then, 't is more than well :  
And glad at heart myself will hew one out,  
Let me be only sure ; for, sooth to tell,  
The sorest dole is doubt—

Doubt, a blank twilight of the heart, which mars  
All sweetest colours in its dimness same ;  
A soul-mist, through whose rifts familiar stars  
Beholding, we misname.

A ripple on the inner sea, which shakes  
Those images that on its breast reposed ;  
A fold upon a wind-swayed flag, that breaks  
The motto it disclosed.

O doubt ! O doubt ! I know my destiny,  
I feel thee fluttering bird-like in my breast !  
I cannot loose, but I will sing to thee,  
And flatter thee to rest.

There is no certainty, 'my bosom's guest,'  
No proving for the things whereof ye wot ;  
For, like the dead to sight unmanifest,  
They are, and they are not.

But surely as they are, for God is truth,  
And as they are not, for we saw them die,  
So surely from the heaven drops light for youth,  
If youth will walk thereby.

And can I see this light? It may be so ;  
'But see it thus and thus,' my fathers said.  
The living do not rule this world ; ah no !  
It is the dead, the dead.

Shall I be slave to every noble soul,  
Study the dead, and to their spirits bend ;  
Or learn to read my own heart's folded scroll,  
And make self-rule my end ?



Thought from without—O shall I take on trust,  
And life from others modelled steal or win ;  
Or shall I heave to light, and clear of rust  
My true life from within ?

O, let me be myself ! But where, O where,  
Under this heap of precedent, this mound  
Of customs, modes, and maxims, cumbrance rare,  
Shall the Myself be found ?

O thou *Myself*, thy fathers thee debarred  
None of their wisdom, but their folly came  
Therewith ; they smoothed thy path, but made it hard  
For thee to quit the same.

With glosses they obscured God's natural truth,  
And with tradition tarnished His revealed ;  
With vain protections they endangered youth,  
With layings bare they sealed.

What aileth thee, myself? Alas ! thy hands  
Are tied with old opinions—heir and son,  
Thou hast inherited thy father's lands  
And all his debts thereon.

O that some power would give me Adam's eyes !  
O for the straight simplicity of Eve!  
For I see nought, or grow, poor fool, too wise  
With seeing to believe.

Exemplars may be heaped until they hide  
The rules that they were made to render plain ;  
Love may be watched, her nature to decide,  
Until love's self doth wane.

Ah me ! and when forgotten and foregone  
We leave the learning of departed days,  
And cease the generations past to con,  
Their wisdom and their ways—

When fain to learn we lean into the dark,  
And grope to feel the floor of the abyss,  
Or find the secret boundary lines which mark  
Where soul and matter kiss—

Fair world ! these puzzled souls of ours grow weak  
With beating their bruised wings against the rim  
That bounds their utmost flying, when they seek  
The distant and the dim.

We pant, we strain like birds against their wires ;  
Are sick to reach the vast and the beyond ;—  
And what avails, if still to our desires  
Those far-off gulfs respond ?

Contentment comes not therefore ; still there lies  
An outer distance when the first is hailed,  
And still for ever yawns before our eyes  
An *UTMOST*—that is veiled.

Searching those edges of the universe,  
We leave the central fields a fallow part ;  
To feed the eye more precious things amerce,  
And starve the darkened heart.

Then all goes wrong : the old foundations rock ;  
One scorns at him of old who gazed unshod ;  
One striking with a pickaxe thinks the shock  
Shall move the seat of God.

A little way, a very little way  
(Life is so short), they dig into the rind,  
And truly they are sorry, so they say,—  
Sorry for what they find.

But truth is sacred—ay, and must be told :  
There is a story long beloved of man ;  
We must forego it, for it will not hold—  
Nature had no such plan.

And then, if ' God hath said it,' some should cry,  
' We have the story from the fountain-head :'  
Why, then, what better than the old reply,  
The first ' Yea, HATH God said ?'

The garden, O the garden, must it go,  
Source of our hope and our most dear regret ?  
The ancient story, must it no more show  
How man may win it yet ?

And all upon the Titan child's decree,  
The baby science, born but yesterday,  
That in its rash unlearned infancy  
With shells and stones at play,

And delving in the outworks of this world,  
And little crevices that it could reach,  
Discovered certain bones laid up, and furled  
Under an ancient beach,

And other waifs that lay to its young mind  
Some fathoms lower than they ought to lie,  
By gain whereof it could not fail to find  
Much proof of ancientry,

Hints at a pedigree withdrawn and vast,  
Terrible deeps, and old obscurities,  
Or soulless origin, and twilight passed  
In the primeval seas,

Whereof it tells, as thinking it hath been  
Of truth not meant for man inheritor ;  
As if this knowledge Heaven had ne'er foreseen  
And not provided for !

Knowledge ordained to live ! although the fate  
Of much that went before it was—to die,  
And be called ignorance by such as wait  
Till the next drift comes by.

O marvellous credulity of man !

If God indeed kept secret, couldst thou know  
Or follow up the mighty Artisan  
Unless He willed it so ?

And canst thou of the Maker think in sooth  
That of the Made He shall be found at fault,  
And dream of wresting from Him hidden truth  
By force or by assault ?

But if He keeps not secret—if thine eyes  
He openeth to His wondrous work of late—  
Think how in soberness thy wisdom lies,  
And have the grace to wait.

Wait, nor against the half-learned lesson fret,  
Nor chide at old belief as if it erred,  
Because thou canst not reconcile as yet  
The Worker and the word.

Either the Worker did in ancient days  
Give us the word, His tale of love and might ;  
(And if in truth He gave it us, who says  
He did not give it right ?)

Or else He gave it not, and then indeed  
We know not if HE IS—by whom our years  
Are portioned, who the orphan moons doth lead,  
And the unfathered spheres.

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We sit unowned upon our burial sod,  
And know not whence we come or whose we be,  
Comfortless mourners for the mount of God,  
The rocks of Calvary :

Bereft of heaven, and of the long-loved page  
Wrought us by some who thought with death to cope ;  
Despairing comforters, from age to age  
Sowing the seeds of hope :

Gracious deceivers, who have lifted us  
Out of the slough where passed our unknown youth ;  
Beneficent liars, who have gifted us  
With sacred love of truth !

Farewell to them : yet pause ere thou unmoor  
And set thine ark adrift on unknown seas :  
How wert thou bettered so, or more secure  
Thou, and thy destinies ?

And if thou searchest, and art made to fear  
Facing of unread riddles dark and hard,  
And mastering not their majesty austere,  
Their meaning locked and barred :

How would it make the weight and wonder less,  
If, lifted from immortal shoulders down,  
The worlds were cast on seas of emptiness  
In realms without a crown,

And (if there were no God) were left to rue  
Dominion of the air and of the fire?  
Then if there be a God, 'Let God be true,  
And every man a liar.'

But as for me, I do not speak as one  
That is exempt : I am with life at feud :  
My heart reproacheth me, as there were none  
Of so small gratitude.

Wherewith shall I console thee, heart o' mine,  
And still thy yearning and resolve thy doubt?  
That which I know, and that which I divine,  
Alas ! have left thee out.

I have aspired to know the might of God,  
As if the story of His love was furled,  
Nor sacred foot the grasses e'er had trod  
Of this redeemèd world :—

Have sunk my thoughts as lead into the deep,  
To grope for that abyss whence evil grew,  
And spirits of ill, with eyes that cannot weep,  
Hungry and desolate flew ;

As if their legions did not one day crowd  
The death-pangs of the Conquering Good to see !  
As if a sacred head had never bowed  
In death for man—for me !

Nor ransomed back the souls beloved, the sons  
Of men, from thralldom with the nether kings  
In that dark country where those evil ones  
Trail their unhallowed wings.

And didst Thou love the race that loved not Thee,  
And didst Thou take to heaven a human brow?  
Dost plead with man's voice by the marvellous sea?  
Art Thou his kinsman now?

O God, O kinsman loved, but not enough!  
O man, with eyes majestic after death,  
Whose feet have toiled along our pathways rough,  
Whose lips drawn human breath!

By that one likeness which is ours and Thine,  
By that one nature which doth hold us kin,  
By that high heaven where, sinless, Thou dost shine  
To draw us sinners in,

By Thy last silence in the judgment-hall,  
By long foreknowledge of the deadly tree,  
By darkness, by the wormwood and the gall,  
I pray Thee visit me.

Come, lest this heart should, cold and cast away,  
Die ere the guest adored she entertain—  
Lest eyes which never saw Thine earthly day  
Should miss Thy heavenly reign.



Come weary-eyed from seeking in the night  
Thy wanderers strayed upon the pathless wold,  
Who wounded, dying, cry to Thee for light,  
And cannot find their fold.

And deign, O Watcher, with the sleepless brow,  
Pathetic in its yearning—deign reply :  
Is there, O is there aught that such as Thou  
Wouldst take from such as I ?

Are there no briars across Thy pathway thrust ?  
Are there no thorns that compass it about ?  
Nor any stones that Thou wilt deign to trust  
My hands to gather out ?

O, if Thou wilt, and if such bliss might be,  
It were a cure for doubt, regret, delay—  
Let my lost pathway go—what aileth me ?—  
There is a better way.

What though unmarked the happy workman toil,  
And break unthanked of man the stubborn clod ?  
It is enough, for sacred is the soil,  
Dear are the hills of God.

Far better in its place the lowliest bird  
Should sing aright to Him the lowliest song,  
Than that a seraph strayed should take the word  
And sing His glory wrong.

Friend, it is time to work. I say to thee  
Thou dost all earthly good by much excel ;  
Thou and God's blessing are enough for me :  
My work, my work—farewell !





*REQUIESCAT IN PACE!*



MY heart is sick awishing and awaiting :

The lad took up his knapsack, he went, he went his way ;

And I looked on for his coming, as a prisoner through the grating

Looks and longs and longs and wishes for its opening day.

On the wild purple mountains, all alone with no other,  
The strong terrible mountains, he longed, he longed to be ;

And he stooped to kiss his father, and he stooped to kiss his mother,

And till I said ' Adieu, sweet Sir,' he quite forgot me.

He wrote of their white raiment, the ghostly capes that screen them,

Of the storm winds that beat them, their thunder-rents and scars

And the paradise of purple, and the golden slopes atween  
them,  
And fields, where grow God's gentian bells, and His  
crocus stars.

He wrote of frail gauzy clouds, that drop on them like  
fleeces,  
And make green their fir forests, and feed their mosses  
hoar ;  
Or come sailing up the valleys, and get wrecked and go  
to pieces,  
Like sloops against their cruel strength : then he wrote  
no more.

O the silence that came next, the patience and long  
aching !  
They never said so much as ' He was a dear loved son ;'  
Not the father to the mother moaned, that dreary still-  
ness breaking :  
' Ah ! wherefore did he leave us so—this, our only one ?'

They sat within, as waiting, until the neighbours prayed  
them,  
At Cromer, by the sea-coast, 'twere peace and change  
to be ;  
And to Cromer, in their patience, or that urgency affrayed  
them.  
Or because the tidings tarried, they came, and took me.

It was three months and over since the dear lad had started :

On the green downs at Cromer I sat to see the view ;  
On an open space of herbage, where the ling and fern  
had parted,  
Betwixt the tall white lighthouse towers, the old and  
the new.

Below me lay the wide sea, the scarlet sun was stooping,  
And he dyed the waste water, as with a scarlet dye ;  
And he dyed the lighthouse towers ; every bird with  
white wing swooping  
Took his colours, and the cliffs did, and the yawning sky.

Over grass came that strange flush, and over ling and  
heather,  
Over flocks of sheep and lambs, and over Cromer town ;  
And each filmy cloudlet crossing drifted like a scarlet  
feather  
Torn from the folded wings of clouds, while he settled  
down.

When I looked, I dared not sigh :—In the light of God's  
splendour,  
With His daily blue and gold, who am I? what am I?  
But that passion and outpouring seemed an awful sign  
and tender,  
Like the blood of the Redeemer, shown on earth and sky.

O for comfort, O the waste of a long doubt and trouble !  
On that sultry August eve trouble had made me meek ;  
I was tired of my sorrow—O so faint, for it was double  
In the weight of its oppression, that I could not  
speak !

And a little comfort grew, while the dimmed eyes were  
feeding,  
And the dull ears with murmur of waters satisfied ;  
But a dream came slowly nigh me, all my thoughts and  
fancy leading  
Across the bounds of waking life to the other side.

And I dreamt that I looked out, to the waste waters  
turning,  
And saw the flakes of scarlet from wave to wave tossed  
on ;  
And the scarlet mix with azure, where a heap of gold lay  
burning  
On the clear remote sea reaches ; for the sun was gone.

Then I thought a far-off shout dropped across the still  
water—  
A question as I took it, for soon an answer came  
From the tall white ruined lighthouse : ‘ If it be the old  
man’s daughter  
That we wot of,’ ran the answer, ‘ what then—who’s to  
blame?’

I looked up at the lighthouse all roofless and storm-broken:  
A great white bird sat on it, with neck stretched out  
to sea ;

Unto somewhat which was sailing in a skiff the bird had  
spoken,

And a trembling seized my spirit, for they talked of me.

I was the old man's daughter, the bird went on to name him;

' He loved to count the starlings as he sat in the sun ;

Long ago he served with Nelson, and his story did not  
shame him :

Ay, the old man was a good man—and his work was done.'

The skiff was like a crescent, ghost of some moon departed,  
Frail, white, she rocked and curtsyed as the red wave  
she crossed,

And the thing within sat paddling, and the crescent  
dipped and darted,

Flying on, again was shouting, but the words were lost.

I said, ' That thing is hooded ; I could hear but that  
floweth

The great hood below its mouth : ' then the bird made  
reply,

' If they know not, more 's the pity, for the little shrew-  
mouse knoweth,

And the kite knows, and the eagle, and the glead and  
pye.'

And he stooped to whet his beak on the stones of the coping ;

And when once more the shout came, in querulous tones he spake,

‘ What I said was “ more’s the pity ;” if the heart be long past hoping,

Let it say of death, “ I know it,” or doubt on and break.

‘ Men must die—one dies by day, and near him moans his mother ;

They dig his grave, tread it down, and go from it full loth :

And one dies about the midnight, and the wind moans, and no other,

And the snows give him a burial—and God loves them both.

‘ The first hath no advantage—it shall not soothe his slumber

That a lock of his brown hair his father’s eye shall keep ;

For the last, he nothing grudgeth, it shall nought his quiet cumber

That in a golden mesh of HIS callow eaglets sleep.

‘ Men must die when all is said, e’en the kite and glead know it,

And the lad’s father knew it, and the lad, the lad too ;



It was never kept a secret, waters bring it and winds  
blow it,  
And he met it on the mountain—why then make  
ado?’

With that he spread his white wings, and swept across  
the water,  
Lit upon the hooded head, and it and all went  
down ;  
And they laughed as they went under, and I woke, ‘ the  
old man’s daughter,’  
And looked across the slope of grass, and at Cromer  
town.

And I said, ‘ Is that the sky, all grey and silver suited ? ’  
And I thought, ‘ Is that the sea that lies so white and  
wan ?  
I have dreamed as I remember : give me time—I was  
reputed  
Once to have a steady courage—O, I fear ’t is gone ! ’

And I said, ‘ Is this my heart ? if it be, low ’t is beating,  
So he lies on the mountain, hard by the eagles’  
brood ;  
I have had a dream this evening, while the white and  
gold were fleeting,  
But I need not, need not tell it—where would be the  
good ? ’

‘Where would be the good to them, his father and his  
mother?’

For the ghost of their dead hope appeareth to them  
still.

While a lonely watchfire smoulders, who its dying red  
would smother,

That gives what little light there is to a darksome  
hill?’

I rose up, I made no moan, I did not cry nor falter,

But slowly in the twilight I came to Cromer town.

What can wringing of the hands do that which is ordained  
to alter?

He had climbed, had climbed the mountain, he would  
ne’er come down.

But, O my first, O my best, I could not choose but love  
thee :

O, to be a wild white bird, and seek thy rocky bed !

From my breast I’d give thee burial, pluck the down and  
spread above thee ;

I would sit and sing thy requiem on the mountain  
head.

Fare thee well, my love of loves ! would I had died  
before thee !

O, to be at least a cloud, that near thee I might flow,

---

Solemnly approach the mountain, weep away my being  
o'er thee,  
And veil thy breast with icicles, and thy brow with  
snow!





*SUPPER AT THE MILL.*

MOTHER.

**W**ELL, Frances.

FRANCES.

Well, good mother, how are you?

*M.* I'm hearty, lass, but warm ; the weather's warm :  
I think 't is mostly warm on market days.  
I met with George behind the mill : said he,  
' Mother, go in and rest awhile.'

*F.* Ay, do,  
And stay to supper ; put your basket down.

*M.* Why, now, it is not heavy?

*F.* Willie, man,  
Get up and kiss your Granny. Heavy, no !  
Some call good churning luck ; but, luck or skill,  
Your butter mostly comes as firm and sweet  
As if 't was Christmas. So you sold it all?

*M.* All but this pat that I put by for George ;  
He always loved my butter.

*F.* That he did.

*M.* And has your speckled hen brought off her brood?

*F.* Not yet ; but that old duck I told you of, She hatched eleven out of twelve to-day.

*Child.* And, Granny, they 're so yellow.

*M.* Ay, my lad, Yellow as gold—yellow as Willie's hair.

*C.* They 're all mine, Granny—father says they 're mine.

*M.* To think of that !

*F.* Yes, Granny, only think !  
Why, father means to sell them when they 're fat,  
And put the money in the savings bank,  
And all against our Willie goes to school :  
But Willie would not touch them—no, not he ;  
He knows that father would be angry else.

*C.* But I want one to play with—O, I want  
A little yellow duck to take to bed !

*M.* What ! would ye rob the poor old mother, then ?

*F.* Now, Granny, if you 'll hold the babe awhile ;  
'T is time I took up Willie to his crib.

[*Exit* FRANCES.]

[*Mother sings to the infant.*

Playing on the virginals,  
Who but I? Sae glad, sae free,  
Smelling for all cordials,  
The green mint and marjorie ;

Set among the budding broom,  
 Kingcup and daffodilly,  
 By my side I made him room :  
 O love my Willie !

‘ Like me, love me, girl o’ gowd,’  
 Sang he to my nimble strain ;  
 Sweet his ruddy lips o’erflowed  
 Till my heartstrings rang again :  
 By the broom, the bonny broom,  
 Kingcup and daffodilly,  
 In my heart I made him room :  
 O love my Willie !

‘ Pipe and play, dear heart,’ sang he,  
 ‘ I must go, yet pipe and play ;  
 Soon I’ll come and ask of thee  
 For an answer yea or nay ;’  
 And I waited till the flocks  
 Panted in yon waters stilly,  
 And the corn stood in the shocks :  
 O love my Willie !

I thought first when thou didst come  
 I would wear the ring for thee,  
 But the year told out its sum  
 Ere again thou sat’st by me ;  
 Thou hadst nought to ask that day  
 By kingcup and daffodilly ;  
 I said neither yea nor nay :  
 O love my Willie !

*Enter* GEORGE.

*G.* Well, mother, ’t is a fortnight now, or more,  
 Since I set eyes on you.

*M.* Ay, George, my dear,  
I reckon you 've been busy: so have we.

*G.* And how does father?

*M.* He gets through his work,  
But he grows stiff, a little stiff, my dear;  
He 's not so young, you know, by twenty years  
As I am—not so young by twenty years,  
And I'm past sixty.

*G.* Yet he's hale and stout,  
And seems to take a pleasure in his pipe;  
And seems to take a pleasure in his cows,  
And a pride, too.

*M.* And well he may, my dear.

*G.* Give me the little one, he tires your arm;  
He 's such a kicking, crowing, wakeful rogue,  
He almost wears our lives out with his noise  
Just at day-dawning, when we wish to sleep.  
What! you young villain, would you clench your fist  
In father's curls? a dusty father, sure,  
And you 're as clean as wax.

Ay, you may laugh;  
But if you live a seven years more or so,  
These hands of yours will all be brown and scratched  
With climbing after nest-eggs. They 'll go down  
As many rat-holes as are round the mere;  
And you 'll love mud, all manner of mud and dirt,  
As your father did afore you, and you 'll wade  
After young water-birds; and you 'll get bogged

Setting of eel-traps, and you 'll spoil your clothes,  
 And come home torn and dripping : then, you know,  
 You 'll feel the stick—you 'll feel the stick, my lad !

*Enter* FRANCES.

*F.* You should not talk so to the blessed babe—  
 How can you, George? why, he may be in heaven  
 Before the time you tell of.

*M.* Look at him :  
 So earnest, such an eager pair of eyes !  
 He thrives, my dear.

*F.* Yes, that he does, thank God !  
 My children are all strong.

*M.* 'T is much to say ;  
 Sick children fret their mothers' hearts to shreds,  
 And do no credit to their keep nor care.  
 Where is your little lass ?

*F.* Your daughter came  
 And begged her of us for a week or so.

*M.* Well, well, she might be wiser, that she might,  
 For she can sit at ease and pay her way ;  
 A sober husband, too—a cheerful man—  
 Honest as ever stepped, and fond of her ;  
 Yet she is never easy, never glad,  
 Because she has not children. Well-a-day !  
 If she could know how hard her mother worked,  
 And what ado I had, and what a moil  
 With my half-dozen ! Children, ay, forsooth,



They bring their own love with them when they come,  
But if they come not there is peace and rest ;  
The pretty lambs ! and yet she cries for more :  
Why, the world's full of them, and so is heaven—  
They are not rare.

*G.* No, mother, not at all ;  
But Hannah must not keep our Fanny long—  
She spoils her.

*M.* Ah ! folks spoil their children now ;  
When I was a young woman 't was not so ;  
We made our children fear us, made them work,  
Kept them in order.

*G.* Were not proud of them—  
Eh, mother ?

*M.* I set store by mine, 't is true,  
But then I had good cause.

*G.* My lad, d' ye hear ?  
Your Granny was not proud, by no means proud !  
She never spoilt your father—no, not she,  
Nor ever made him sing at harvest-home,  
Nor at the forge, nor at the baker's shop,  
Nor to the doctor while she lay abed  
Sick, and he crept upstairs to share her broth.

*M.* Well, well, you were my youngest, and, what's  
more,  
Your father loved to hear you sing—he did,  
Although, good man, he could not tell one tune  
From the other.

*F.* No, he got his voice from you :  
Do use it, George, and send the child to sleep.

*G.* What must I sing?

*F.* The ballad of the man  
That is so shy he cannot speak his mind.

*G.* Ay, of the purple grapes and crimson leaves ;  
But, mother, put your shawl and bonnet off.  
And, Frances, lass, I brought some cresses in :  
Just wash them, toast the bacon, break some eggs.  
And let 's to supper shortly.

[*Sings.*]

My neighbour White—we met to-day—  
He always had a cheerful way,  
As if he breathed at ease ;  
My neighbour White lives down the glade,  
And I live higher, in the shade  
Of my old walnut-trees.

So many lads and lasses small,  
To feed them all, to clothe them all,  
Must surely tax his wit ;  
I see his thatch when I look out,  
His branching roses creep about,  
And vines half smother it.

There white-haired urchins climb his eaves  
And little watch-fires heap with leaves,  
And milky filberts hoard ;  
And there his oldest daughter stands  
With downcast eyes and skilful hands  
Before her ironing-board.

She comforts all her mother's days,  
And with her sweet obedient ways  
She makes her labour light ;  
So sweet to hear, so fair to see !  
O, she is much too good for me,  
That lovely Lettice White !

'T is hard to feel oneself a fool !  
With that same lass I went to school—  
I then was great and wise ;  
She read upon an easier book,  
And I—I never cared to look  
Into her shy blue eyes.

And now I know they must be there,  
Sweet eyes, behind those lashes fair  
That will not raise their rim :  
If maids be shy, he cures who can ;  
But if a man be shy—a man—  
Why then the worse for him !

My mother cries, ' For such a lad  
A wife is easy to be had  
And always to be found ;  
A finer scholar scarce can be,  
And for a foot and leg,' says she,  
' He beats the country round !

' My handsome boy must stoop his head  
To clear her door whom he would wed.'  
Weak praise, but fondly sung  
' O mother ! scholars sometimes fail—  
And what can foot and leg avail  
To him that wants a tongue ?'

When by her ironing-board I sit,  
Her little sisters round me flit,  
And bring me forth their store ;

Dark cluster grapes of dusty blue,  
 And small sweet apples bright of hue  
 And crimson to the core.

But she abideth silent, fair,  
 All shaded by her flaxen hair  
 The blushes come and go ;  
 I look, and I no more can speak  
 Than the red sun that on her cheek  
 Smiles as he lieth low.

Sometimes the roses by the latch  
 Or scarlet vine-leaves from her thatch  
 Come sailing down like birds ;  
 When from their drifts her board I clear,  
 She thanks me, but I scarce can hear  
 The shyly uttered words.

Oft have I wooed sweet Lettice White  
 By daylight and by candlelight  
 When we two were apart  
 Some better day come on apace,  
 And let me tell her face to face,  
 'Maiden, thou hast my heart.'

How gently rock yon poplars high  
 Against the reach of primrose sky  
 With heaven's pale candles stored !  
 She sees them all, sweet Lettice White ;  
 I'll e'en go sit again to-night  
 Beside her ironing-board !

Why, you young rascal ! who would think it, now ?  
 No sooner do I stop than you look up.  
 What would you have your poor old father do ?  
 'T was a brave song, long-winded, and not loud.

*M.* He heard the bacon sputter on the fork,  
And heard his mother's step across the floor.  
Where did you get that song?—'t is new to me.

*G.* I bought it of a pedlar.

*M.* Did you so?

Well, you were always for the love-songs, George.

*F.* My dear, just lay his head upon your arm,  
And if you 'll pace and sing two minutes more  
He needs must sleep—his eyes are full of sleep.

*G.* Do you sing, mother.

*F.* Ay, good mother, do ;  
'T is long since we have heard you.

*M.* Like enough ;  
I'm an old woman, and the girls and lads  
I used to sing to sleep o'ertop me now.  
What should I sing for?

*G.* Why, to pleasure us.  
Sing in the chimney corner, where you sit,  
And I 'll pace gently with the little one.

[*Mother sings.*]

When sparrows build, and the leaves break forth,  
My old sorrow wakes and cries,  
For I know there is dawn in the far, far north,  
And a scarlet sun doth rise ;  
Like a scarlet fleece the snow-field spreads,  
And the icy founts run free,  
And the bergs begin to bow their heads,  
And plunge, and sail in the sea.

O my lost love, and my own, own love,  
 And my love that loved me so !  
 Is there never a chink in the world above  
 Where they listen for words from below ?  
 Nay, I spoke once, and I grieved thee sore,  
 I remember all that I said,  
 And now thou wilt hear me no more--no more  
 Till the sea gives up her dead.

\*Thou didst set thy foot on the ship, and sail  
 To the ice-fields and the snow ;  
 Thou wert sad, for thy love did nought avail,  
 And the end I could not know ;  
 How could I tell I should love thee to-day,  
 Whom that day I held not dear ?  
 How could I know I should love thee away  
 When I did not love thee anear ?

We shall walk no more through the sodden plain  
 With the faded bents o'erspread,  
 We shall stand no more by the seething main  
 While the dark wrack drives o'erhead ;  
 We shall part no more in the wind and the rain,  
 Where thy last farewell was said ;  
 But perhaps I shall meet thee and know thee again  
 When the sea gives up her dead.

*F.* Asleep at last, and time he was, indeed.  
 Turn back the cradle-quilt, and lay him in ;  
 And, mother, will you please to draw your chair?—  
 The supper 's ready.

above poem 'when sparrows build' was written about the  
 of a Miss Sophy Crockett who was a niece of Lady Franklin with  
 she went to stay in Tasmania when Sir John was Governor there  
 Crockett was quite young & a nephew of Sir John's proposed to  
 She refused him & he joined Sir John's expedition  
 to the North Pole & was never heard of again. Miss Cro-  
 ckett lived to be quite old but she never married &  
 surrounded with relics of the Franklin Expedition  
 all her life



*SCHOLAR AND CARPENTER.*

**W**HILE ripening corn grew thick and deep,  
And here and there men stood to reap,  
One morn I put my heart to sleep,  
And to the lanes I took my way.

The goldfinch on a thistle-head  
Stood scattering seedlets while she fed ;  
The wrens their pretty gossip spread,  
Or joined a random roundelay.

On hanging cobwebs shone the dew,  
And thick the wayside clovers grew ;  
The feeding bee had much to do,  
So fast did honey-drops exude :  
She sucked and murmured, and was gone,  
And lit on other blooms anon,  
The while I learned a lesson on  
The source and sense of quietude.



For sheep-bells chiming from a wold,  
 Or bleat of lamb within its fold,  
 Or cooing of love-legends old  
     To dove-wives make not quiet less ;  
 Ecstatic chirp of wingèd thing,  
 Or bubbling of the water-spring,  
 Are sounds that more than silence bring  
     Itself and its delightsomeness.

While thus I went to gladness fain,  
 I had but walked a mile or twain  
 Before my heart woke up again,  
     As dreaming she had slept too late :  
 The morning freshness that she viewed  
 With her own meanings she endued,  
 And touched with her solicitude  
     The natures she did meditate.

' If quiet is, for it I wait ;  
 To it, ah ! let me wed my fate,  
 And, like a sad wife, supplicate  
     My roving lord no more to flee ;  
 If leisure is—but, ah ! 't is not—  
 'T is long past praying for, God wot ;  
 The fashion of it men forgot,  
     About the age of chivalry.



' Sweet is the leisure of the bird ;  
She craves no time for work deferred ;  
Her wings are not to aching stirred  
    Providing for her helpless ones.  
Fair is the leisure of the wheat ;  
All night the damps about it fleet ;  
All day it basketh in the heat,  
    And grows, and whispers orisons.

' Grand is the leisure of the earth ;  
She gives her happy myriads birth,  
And after harvest fears not dearth,  
    But goes to sleep in snow-wreaths dim.  
Dread is the leisure up above  
The while He sits whose name is Love,  
And waits, as Noah did, for the dove,  
    To wit if she would fly to him.

' He waits for us, while, houseless things,  
We beat about with bruised wings  
On the dark floods and water-springs,  
    The ruined world, the desolate sea ;  
With open windows from the prime  
All night, all day, He waits sublime,  
Until the fullness of the time  
    Decreed from His eternity.

‘Where is our leisure?—Give us rest.  
Where is the quiet we possessed?  
We must have had it once—were blest  
    With peace whose phantoms yet entice.  
Sorely the mother of mankind  
Longed for the garden left behind ;  
For we prove yet some yearnings blind  
    Inherited from Paradise.’

‘Hold, heart!’ I cried ; ‘for trouble sleeps :  
I hear no sound of aught that weeps ;  
I will not look into thy deeps—  
    I am afraid, I am afraid !’  
‘Afraid!’ she saith ; ‘and yet ’t is true  
That what man dreads he still should view—  
Should do the thing he fears to do,  
    And storm the ghosts in ambuscade.’

‘What good?’ I sigh. ‘Was reason meant  
To straighten branches that are bent,  
Or soothe an ancient discontent,  
    The instinct of a race dethroned?  
Ah! doubly should that instinct go  
Must the four rivers cease to flow,  
Nor yield those rumours sweet and low  
    Wherewith man’s life is undertoned.’

‘ Yet had I but the past,’ she cries,  
‘ And it was lost, I would arise  
And comfort me some other wise.  
    But more than loss about me clings :  
I am but restless with my race ;  
The whispers from a heavenly place,  
Once dropped among us, seem to chase  
    Rest with their prophet-visitings.

‘ The race is like a child ; as yet  
Too young for all things to be set  
Plainly before him with no let  
    Or hindrance meet for his degree ;  
But ne’ertheless by much too old  
Not to perceive that men withhold  
More of the story than is told,  
    And so infer a mystery.

‘ If the Celestials daily fly  
With messages on missions high,  
And float, our masts and turrets nigh,  
    Conversing on Heaven’s great intents ;  
What wonder hints of coming things,  
Whereto man’s hope and yearning clings,  
Should drop like feathers from their wings  
    And give us vague presentiments ?

‘ And as the waxing moon can take  
The tidal waters in her wake  
And lead them round and round to break  
Obedient to her drawings dim ;  
So may the movements of His mind,  
The first Great Father of mankind,  
Affect with answering movements blind,  
And draw the souls that breathe by Him.

‘ We had a message long ago  
That like a river peace should flow,  
And Eden bloom again below.  
We heard, and we began to wait :  
Full soon that message men forgot ;  
Yet waiting is their destined lot,  
And waiting for they know not what  
They strive with yearnings passionate

‘ Regret and faith alike enchain ;  
There was a loss, there comes a gain ;  
We stand at fault betwixt the twain,  
And that is veiled for which we pant.  
Our lives are short, our ten times seven ;  
We think the councils held in heaven  
Sit long, ere yet that blissful leaven  
Work peace amongst the militant.

‘Then we blame God that sin should be :  
Adam began it at the tree,  
“The woman whom THOU gavest me ;”  
And we adopt his dark device.  
O long Thou tarriest ! come and reign,  
And bring forgiveness in Thy train,  
And give us in our hands again  
The apples of Thy Paradise.’

‘Far-seeing heart ! if that be all,  
The happy things that did not fall,’  
I sighed, ‘from every coppice call  
They never from that garden went.  
Behold their joy, so comfort thee,  
Behold the blossom and the bee,  
For they are yet as good and free  
As when poor Eve was innocent.

‘But reason thus : “If we sank low,  
If the lost garden we forego,  
Each in his day, nor ever know  
But in our poet souls its face ;  
Yet we may rise until we reach  
A height untold of in its speech—  
A lesson that it could not teach  
Learn in this darker dwelling-place.”

‘And reason on : “ We take the spoil ;  
 Loss made us poets, and the soil  
 Taught us great patience in our toil,  
     And life is kin to God through death.  
 Christ were not One with us but so,  
 And if bereft of Him we go ;  
 Dearer the heavenly mansions grow,  
     His home, to man that wandereth.”

‘Content thee so, and ease thy smart.’  
 With that she slept again, my heart,  
 And I admired and took my part  
     With crowds of happy things the while :  
 With open velvet butterflies  
 That swung and spread their peacock eyes,  
 As if they cared no more to rise  
     From off their beds of camomile.

The blackcaps in an orchard met,  
 Praising the berries while they ate ;  
 The finch that flew her beak to whet  
     Before she joined them on the tree ;  
 The water mouse among the reeds—  
 His bright eyes glancing black as beads,  
 So happy with a bunch of seeds—  
     I felt their gladness heartily.

But I came on, I smelt the hay,  
And up the hills I took my way,  
And down them still made holiday,  
    And walked, and wearied not a whit ;  
But ever with the lane I went  
Until it dropped with steep descent,  
Cut deep into the rock, a tent  
    Of maple branches roofing it.

Adown the rock small runlets wept,  
And reckless ivies leaned and crept,  
And little spots of sunshine slept  
    On its brown steeps and made them fair ;  
And broader beams athwart it shot,  
Where martins cheeped in many a knot,  
For they had ta'en a sandy plot  
    And scooped another Petra there.

And deeper down, hemmed in and hid  
From upper light and life amid  
The swallows gossiping, I thrid  
    Its mazes, till the dipping land  
Sank to the level of my lane :  
That was the last hill of the chain,  
And fair below I saw the plain  
    That seemed cold cheer to reprimand.

Half-drowned in sleepy peace it lay,  
As satiate with the boundless play  
Of sunshine on its green array.

And clear-cut hills of gloomy blue  
To keep it safe rose up behind,  
As with a charmèd ring to bind  
The grassy sea, where clouds might find  
A place to bring their shadows to.

I said, and blest that pastoral grace,  
'How sweet thou art, thou sunny place !  
Thy God approves thy smiling face :'

But straight my heart put in her word ;  
She said, 'Albeit thy face I bless,  
There have been times, sweet wilderness,  
When I have wished to love thee less,  
Such pangs thy smile administered.

But, lo ! I reached a field of wheat,  
And by its gate full clear and sweet  
A workman sang, while at his feet  
Played a young child, all life and stir—  
A three years' child, with rosy lip,  
Who in the song had partnership,  
Made happy with each falling chip  
Dropped by the busy carpenter.



This, reared a new gate for the old,  
And loud the tuneful measure rolled,  
But stopped as I came up to hold  
    Some kindly talk of passing things.  
Brave were his eyes, and frank his mien ;  
Of all men's faces, calm or keen,  
A better I have never seen  
    In all my lonely wanderings.

And how it was I scarce can tell,  
We seemed to please each other well ;  
I lingered till a noontide bell  
    Had sounded, and his task was done.  
An oak had screened us from the heat ;  
And 'neath it in the standing wheat,  
A cradle and a fair retreat,  
    Full sweetly slept the little one.

The workman rested from his stroke,  
And manly were the words he spoke,  
Until the smiling babe awoke  
    And prayed to him for milk and food.  
Then to a runlet forth he went,  
And brought a wallet from the bent,  
And bade me to the meal, intent  
    I should not quit his neighbourhood.

‘ For here,’ said he, ‘ are bread and beer,  
 And meat enough to make good cheer .  
 Sir, eat with me, and have no fear,  
     For none upon my work depend,  
 Saving this child ; and I may say  
 That I am rich, for every day  
 I put by somewhat ; therefore stay,  
     And to such eating condescend.’

We ate. The child—child fair to see—  
 Began to cling about his knee,  
 And he down leaning fatherly  
     Received some softly-prattled prayer ;  
 He smiled as if to list were balm,  
 And with his labour-hardened palm  
 Pushed from the baby-forehead calm  
     Those shining locks that clustered there.

The rosy mouth made fresh essay—  
 ‘ O would he sing, or would he play ? ’  
 I looked, my thought would make its way—  
     ‘ Fair is your child of face and limb,  
 The round blue eyes full sweetly shine.’  
 He answered me with glance benign—  
 ‘ Ay, Sir ; but he is none of mine,  
     Although I set great store by him.’

With that, as if his heart was fain  
To open—nathless not complain—  
He let my quiet questions gain  
    His story: ‘Not of kin to me,’  
Repeating; ‘but asleep, awake,  
For worse, for better, him I take,  
To cherish for my dead wife’s sake,  
    And count him as her legacy.

‘I married with the sweetest lass  
That ever stepped on meadow grass;  
That ever at her looking-glass  
    Some pleasure took, some natural care;  
That ever swept a cottage floor  
And worked all day, nor e’er gave o’er  
Till eve, then watched beside the door  
    Till her good man should meet her there.

‘But I lost all in its fresh prime;  
My wife fell ill before her time—  
Just as the bells began to chime  
    One Sunday morn. By next day’s light  
Her little babe was born and dead,  
And she, unconscious what she said,  
With feeble hands about her spread,  
    Sought it with yearnings infinite.

' With mother-longing still beguiled,  
And lost in fever-fancies wild,  
She piteously bemoaned her child  
That we had stolen, she said, away.  
And ten sad days she sighed to me,  
" I cannot rest until I see  
My pretty one ! I think that he  
Smiled in my face but yesterday."

' Then she would change, and faintly try  
To sing some tender lullaby ;  
And " Ah ! " would moan, " if I should die,  
Who, sweetest babe, would cherish thee ? "  
Then weep, " My pretty boy is grown ;  
With tender feet on the cold stone  
He stands, for he can stand alone,  
And no one leads him motherly."

' Then she with dying movements slow  
Would seem to knit, or seem to sew :  
" His feet are bare, he must not go  
Unshod : " and as her death drew on,  
" O little baby," she would sigh ;  
" My little child, I cannot die  
Till I have you to slumber nigh—  
You, you to set mine eyes upon."

‘When she spake thus, and moaning lay,  
They said, “She cannot pass away,  
So sore she longs :” and as the day  
    Broke on the hills, I left her side.  
Mourning along this lane I went ;  
Some travelling folk had pitched their tent  
Up yonder : there a woman, bent  
    With age, sat meanly canopied.

‘A twelvemonths’ child was at her side :  
“Whose infant may that be ?” I cried.  
“His that will own him,” she replied ;  
    “His mother’s dead, no worse could be.”  
“Since you can give—or else I erred—  
See, you are taken at your word,”  
Quoth I ; “that child is mine ; I heard,  
    And own him ! Rise, and give him me.”

‘She rose amazed, but cursed me too ;  
She could not hold such luck for true,  
But gave him soon, with small ado.  
    I laid him by my Lucy’s side :  
Close to her face that baby crept,  
And stroked it, and the sweet soul wept ;  
Then, while upon her arm he slept,  
    She passed, for she was satisfied.

‘ I loved her well, I wept her sore,  
And when her funeral left my door  
I thought that I should never more  
    Feel any pleasure near me glow ;  
But I have learned, though this I had,  
’T is sometimes natural to be glad,  
And no man can be always sad  
    Unless he wills to have it so.

‘ Oh, I had heavy nights at first,  
And daily wakening was the worst :  
For then my grief arose, and burst  
    Like something fresh upon my head.  
Yet when less keen it seemed to grow,  
I was not pleased—I wished to go  
Mourning adown this vale of woe,  
    For all my life uncomforted.

‘ I grudged myself the lightsome air,  
That makes man cheerful unaware ;  
When comfort came, I did not care  
    To take it in, to feel it stir :  
And yet God took with me His plan,  
And now for my appointed span  
I think I am a happier man  
    For having wed and wept for her.

' Because no natural tie remains,  
On this small thing I spend my gains ;  
God makes me love him for my pains,  
    And binds me so to wholesome care :  
I would not lose from my past life  
That happy year, that happy wife !  
Yet now I wage no useless strife  
    With feelings blithe and debonair.'

' I have the courage to be gay,  
Although she lieth lapped away  
Under the daisies, for I say,  
    " Thou wouldst be glad if thou couldst see :"  
My constant thought makes manifest  
I have not what I love the best,  
But I must thank God for the rest  
    While I hold heaven a verity.'

He rose, upon his shoulder set  
The child, and while with vague regret  
We parted, pleased that we had met,  
    My heart did with herself confer ;  
With wholesome shame she did repent  
Her reasonings idly eloquent,  
And said, ' I might be more content :  
    But God go with the carpenter.'



*THE STAR'S MONUMENT.*

IN THE CONCLUDING PART OF A DISCOURSE ON FAME.

*[He thinks.]*

**I**F there be memory in the world to come,  
If thought recur to SOME THINGS silenced  
here,  
Then shall the deep heart be no longer dumb,  
But find expression in that happier sphere ;  
It shall not be denied their utmost sum  
Of love, to speak without or fault or fear,  
But utter to the harp with changes sweet  
Words that, forbidden still, then heaven were incomplete

*[He speaks.]*

Now let us talk about the ancient days,  
And things which happened long before our birth :  
It is a pity to lament that praise  
Should be no shadow in the train of worth.  
What is it, Madam, that your heart dismays ?  
Why murmur at the course of this vast earth ?



Think rather of the work than of the praise ;  
Come, we will talk about the ancient days.

There was a Poet, Madam, once (said he) ;  
I will relate his story to you now,  
While through the branches of this apple-tree  
Some spots of sunshine flicker on your brow ;  
While every flower hath on its breast a bee,  
And every bird in stirring doth endow  
The grass with falling blooms that smoothly glide,  
As ships drop down a river with the tide.

For telling of his tale no fitter place  
Than this old orchard, sloping to the west ;  
Through its pink dome of blossom I can trace  
Some overlying azure ; for the rest,  
These flowery branches round us interlace ;  
The ground is hollowed like a mossy nest :  
Who talks of fame while the religious Spring  
Offers the incense of her blossoming ?

There was a Poet, Madam, once (said he),  
Who, while he walked at sundown in a lane,  
Took to his heart the hope that destiny  
Had singled him this guerdon to obtain,  
That by the power of his sweet minstrelsy  
Some hearts for truth and goodness he should gain,  
And charm some grovellers to uplift their eyes  
And suddenly wax conscious of the skies.

' Master, good e'en to ye ! ' a woodman said,  
    Who the low hedge was trimming with his shears.  
' This hour is fine '—the Poet bowed his head.  
    ' More fine,' he thought, ' O friend ! to me appears  
The sunset than to you ; finer the spread  
    Of orange lustre through these azure spheres,  
Where little clouds lie still, like flocks of sheep,  
Or vessels sailing in God's other deep.

' O finer far ! What work so high as mine,  
    Interpreter betwixt the world and man,  
Nature's ungathered pearls to set and shrine,  
    The mystery she wraps her in to scan ;  
Her unsyllabic voices to combine,  
    And serve her with such love as poets can ;  
With mortal words, her chant of praise to bind,  
Then die, and leave the poem to mankind ?

' O fair, O fine, O lot to be desired !  
    Early and late my heart appeals to me,  
And says, " O work, O will—Thou man, be fired  
    To earn this lot,"—she says, " I would not be  
A worker for mine OWN bread, or one hired  
    For mine OWN profit. O, I would be free  
To work for others ; love so earned of them  
Should be my wages and my diadem.

‘ “Then when I died I should not fall,” says she,  
“ Like dropping flowers that no man noticeth,  
But like a great branch of some stately tree  
Rent in a tempest, and flung down to death,  
Thick with green leafage—so that piteously  
Each passer by that ruin shuddereth,  
And saith, The gap this branch hath left is wide ;  
The loss thereof can never be supplied.” ’

But, Madam, while the Poet pondered so,  
Toward the leafy hedge he turned his eye,  
And saw two slender branches that did grow,  
And from it rising spring and flourish high :  
Their tops were twined together fast, and, lo,  
Their shadow crossed the path as he went by—  
The shadow of a wild rose and a briar,  
And it was shaped in semblance like a lyre.

In sooth, a lyre ! and as the soft air played,  
Those branches stirred, but did not disunite.  
‘ O emblem meet for me ! ’ the Poet said ;  
‘ Ay, I accept and own thee for my right ;  
The shadowy lyre across my feet is laid,  
Distinct though frail, and clear with crimson light ;  
Fast is it twined to bear the windy strain,  
And, supple, it will bend and rise again.

‘ This lyre is cast across the dusty way,  
The common path that common men pursue ;  
I crave like blessing for my shadowy lay,  
Life’s trodden paths with beauty to renew,  
And cheer the eve of many a toil-stained day.  
Light it, old sun, wet it, thou common dew,  
That ’neath men’s feet its image still may be  
While yet it waves above them, living lyre, like thee !’

But even as the Poet spoke, behold  
He lifted up his face toward the sky ;  
The ruddy sun dipt under the grey wold,  
His shadowy lyre was gone ; and, passing by,  
The woodman lifting up his shears, was bold  
Their temper on those branches twain to try,  
And all their loveliness and leafage sweet  
Fell in the pathway, at the Poet’s feet.

‘ Ah ! my fair emblem that I chose,’ quoth he,  
‘ That for myself I coveted but now,  
Too soon, methinks, thou hast been false to me ;  
The lyre from pathway fades, the light from brow.  
Then straightway turned he from it hastily,  
As dream that waking sense will disallow ;  
And while the highway heavenward paled apace,  
He went on westward to his dwelling-place.

He went on steadily, while far and fast  
The summer darkness dropped upon the world,  
A gentle air among the cloudlets passed  
And fanned away their crimson ; then it curled.  
The yellow poppies in the field, and cast  
A dimness on the grasses, for it furled  
Their daisies, and swept out the purple stain  
That eve had left upon the pastoral plain.

He reached his city. Lo ! the darkened street  
Where he abode was full of gazing crowds ;  
He heard the muffled tread of many feet ;  
A multitude stood gazing at the clouds.  
'What mark ye there,' said he, 'and wherefore meet ?  
Only a passing mist the heaven o'ershrouds ;  
It breaks, it parts, it drifts like scattered spars—  
What lies behind it but the nightly stars ?'

Then did the gazing crowd to him aver  
They sought a lamp in heaven whose light was hid ;  
For that in sooth an old Astronomer  
Down from his roof had rushed into their mid,  
Frighted, and fain with others to confer ;  
That he had cried, 'O sirs !'—and upward bid  
Them gaze—'O sirs, a light is quenched afar ;  
Look up, my masters, we have lost a star !'

The people pointed, and the Poet's eyes  
 Flew upward, where a gleaming sisterhood  
 Swam in the dewy heaven. The very skies  
 Were mutable ; for all-amazed he stood  
 To see that truly not in any wise  
 He could behold them as of old, nor could  
 His eyes receive the whole whereof he wot,  
 But when he told them over, one WAS NOT.

While yet he gazed and pondered reverently,  
 The fickle folk began to move away.  
 'It is but one star less for us to see,  
 And what does one star signify?' quoth they ;  
 'The heavens are full of them.' 'But, ah !' said he,  
 'That star was bright while yet she lasted.' 'Ay !'  
 They answered : 'praise her, Poet, an' ye will :  
 Some are now shining that are brighter still.'

'Poor star ! to be disparagèd so soon  
 On her withdrawal,' thus the Poet sighed ;  
 'That men should miss, and straight deny her noon  
 Its brightness !' But the people in their pride  
 Said, 'How are we beholden ? 't was no boon  
 She gave. Her nature 't was to shine so wide :  
 She could not choose but shine, nor could we know  
 Such star had ever dwelt in heaven but so.'

The Poet answered sadly, ' That is true !'  
And then he thought upon unthankfulness ;  
While some went homeward, and the residue,  
Reflecting that the stars are numberless,  
Mourned that man's daylight hours should be so few,  
So short the shining that his path may bless :  
To nearer themes then tuned their willing lips,  
And thought no more upon the star's eclipse.

But he, the Poet, could not rest content  
Till he had found that old Astronomer ;  
Therefore at midnight to his house he went  
And prayed him be his tale's interpreter.  
And yet upon the heaven his eyes he bent,  
Hearing the marvel ; yet he sought for her  
That was awanting, in the hope her face  
Once more might fill its reft abiding-place.

Then said the old Astronomer : ' My son,  
I sat alone upon my roof to-night ;  
I saw the stars come forth, and scarcely shun  
To fringe the edges of the western light ;  
I marked those ancient clusters one by one,  
The same that blessed our old forefather's sight :  
For God alone is older—none but He  
Can charge the stars with mutability :



‘ The elders of the night, the steadfast stars,  
The old, old stars which God has let us see,  
That they might be our soul’s auxiliars,  
And help us to the truth how young we be—  
God’s youngest, latest born, as if, some spars  
And a little clay being over of them—He  
Had made our world and us thereof, yet given,  
To humble us, the sight of His great heaven.

· But ah ! my son, to-night mine eyes have seen  
The death of light, the end of old renown ;  
A shrinking back of glory that had been,  
A dread eclipse before the Eternal’s frown.  
How soon a little grass will grow between  
These eyes and those appointed to look down  
Upon a world that was not made on high  
Till the last scenes of their long empire !

‘ To-night that shining cluster now despoiled  
Lay in day’s wake a perfect sisterhood ;  
Sweet was its light to me that long had toiled,  
It gleamed and trembled o’er the distant wood ;  
Blown in a pile the clouds from it recoiled,  
Cool twilight up the sky her way made good ;  
I saw, but not believed—it was so strange—  
That one of those same stars had suffered change.



‘ The darkness gathered, and methought she spread,  
    Wrapped in a reddish haze that waxed and waned ;  
But notwithstanding to myself I said—  
    “ The stars are changeless ; sure some mote hath  
    stained  
Mine eyes, and her fair glory minishèd.”  
    Of age and failing vision I complained,  
And thought “ some vapour in the heavens doth swim,  
That makes her look so large and yet so dim.”

‘ But I gazed round, and all her lustrous peers  
    In her red presence showed but wan and white ;  
For like a living coal beheld through tears  
    She glowed and quivered with a gloomy light :  
Methought she trembled, as all sick through fears,  
    Helpless, appalled, appealing to the night ;  
Like one who throws his arms up to the sky  
And bows down suffering, hopeless of reply.

‘ At length, as if an everlasting Hand  
    Had taken hold upon her in her place,  
And swiftly, like a golden grain of sand,  
    Through all the deep infinitudes of space  
Was drawing her—God’s truth as here I stand—  
    Backward and inward to itself ; her face  
Fast lessened, lessened, till it looked no more  
Than smallest atom on a boundless shore.

‘ And she that was so fair, I saw her lie,  
The smallest thing in God’s great firmament,  
Till night was at the darkest, and on high  
Her sisters glittered, though her light was spent ;  
I strained, to follow her, each aching eye,  
So swiftly at her Maker’s will she went ;  
I looked again—I looked—the star was gone,  
And nothing marked in heaven where she had shone.’

‘ Gone ! ’ said the Poet, ‘ and about to be  
Forgotten : O, how sad a fate is hers ! ’  
‘ How is it sad, my son ? ’ all reverently  
The old man answered ; ‘ though she ministers  
No longer with her lamp to me and thee,  
She has fulfilled her mission. God transfers  
Or dims her ray ; yet was she blest as bright,  
For all her life was spent in giving light.’

‘ Her mission she fulfilled assuredly,’  
The Poet cried : ‘ but, O unhappy star !  
None praise and few will bear in memory  
The name she went by. O, from far, from far  
Comes down, methinks, her mournful voice to me,  
Full of regrets that men so thankless are.’  
So said, he told that old Astronomer  
All that the gazing crowd had said of her.

And he went on to speak in bitter wise,  
As one who seems to tell another's fate,  
But feels that nearer meaning underlies,  
And points its sadness to his own estate :  
' If such be the reward,' he said with sighs,  
' Envy to earn for love, for goodness hate—  
If such be thy reward, hard case is thine !  
It had been better for thee not to shine.

If to reflect a light that is divine  
Makes that which doth reflect it better seen,  
And if to see is to condemn the shrine,  
'T were surely better it had never been :  
It had been better for her NOT TO SHINE,  
And for me NOT TO SING. Better, I ween,  
For us to yield no more that radiance bright,  
For them, to lack the light than scorn the light.'

Strange words were those from Poet lips (said he) ;  
And then he paused, and sighed, and turned to look  
Upon the lady's downcast eyes, and see  
How fast the honey-bees in settling shook  
Those apple blossoms on her from the tree ;  
He watched her busy fingers as they took  
And slipped the knotted thread, and thought how much  
He would have given that hand to hold—to touch.

At length, as suddenly become aware  
 Of this long pause, she lifted up her face,  
 And he withdrew his eyes—she looked so fair  
 And cold, he thought, in her unconscious grace.  
 ‘Ah ! little dreams she of the restless care,’  
 He thought, ‘that makes my heart to throb apace :  
 Though we this morning part, the knowledge sends  
 No thrill to her calm pulse—we are but FRIENDS.’

Ah ! turret clock (he thought), I would thy hand  
 Were hid behind yon towering maple-trees !  
 Ah ! tell-tale shadow, but one moment stand—  
 Dark shadow—fast advancing to my knees ;  
 Ah ! foolish heart (he thought), that vainly planned  
 By feigning gladness to arrive at ease ;  
 Ah ! painful hour, yet pain to think it ends ;  
 I must remember that we are but friends.

And while the knotted thread moved to and fro,  
 In sweet regretful tones that lady said :  
 ‘It seemeth that the fame you would forego  
 The Poet whom you tell of coveted ;  
 But I would fain, methinks, his story know.

And was he loved ?’ said she, ‘or was he wed ?  
 And had he friends ?’ ‘One friend, perhaps,’ said he,  
 ‘But for the rest, I pray you let it be.’

Ah! little bird (he thought), most patient bird,  
Breasting thy speckled eggs the long day through,  
By so much as my reason is preferred  
Above thine instinct, I my work would do  
Better than thou dost thine. Thou hast not stirred  
This hour thy wing. Ah! russet bird, I sue  
For a like patience to wear through these hours—  
Bird on thy nest among the apple-flowers.

I will not speak—I will not speak to thee,  
My star! and soon to be my lost, lost star.  
The sweetest, first, that ever shone on me,  
So high above me and beyond so far;  
I can forego thee, but not bear to see  
My love, like rising mist, thy lustre mar:  
That were a base return for thy sweet light.  
Shine, though I never more shall see that thou art bright.

Never! 'T is certain that no hope is—none!  
No hope for me, and yet for thee no fear.  
The hardest part of my hard task is done;  
Thy calm assures me that I am not dear;  
Though far and fast the rapid moments run,  
Thy bosom heaveth not, thine eyes are clear;  
Silent, perhaps a little sad at heart  
She is. I am her friend, and I depart.

Silent she had been, but she raised her face ;  
 ‘ And will you end,’ said she, ‘ this half-told tale ?’  
 ‘ Yes, it were best,’ he answered her. ‘ The place  
 Where I left off was where he felt to fail  
 His courage, Madam, through the fancy base  
 That they who love, endure, or work, may rail  
 And cease—if all their love, the works they wrought,  
 And their endurance, men have set at nought.’

‘ It had been better for me NOT to sing,’  
 My Poet said, ‘ and for her NOT to shine ;’  
 But him the old man answered, sorrowing,  
 ‘ My son, did God who made her, the Divine  
 Lighter of suns, when down to yon bright ring  
 He cast her, like some gleaming almandine  
 And set her in her place, begirt with rays,  
 Say unto her “ Give light,” or say “ Earn praise ” ?’

The Poet said, ‘ He made her to give light.’  
 ‘ My son,’ the old man answered, ‘ blest are such :  
 A blessed lot is theirs ; but if each night  
 Mankind had praised her radiance—inasmuch  
 As praise had never made it wax more bright,  
 And cannot now rekindle with its touch  
 Her lost effulgence, it is nought. I wot  
 That praise was not her blessing nor her lot.’

'Ay,' said the Poet, 'I my words abjure,  
And I repent me that I uttered them ;  
But by her light and by its forfeiture  
She shall not pass without her requiem.  
Though my name perish, yet shall hers endure ;  
Though I should be forgotten, she, lost gem,  
Shall be remembered ; though she sought not fame,  
It shall be busy with her beauteous name.

'For I will raise in her bright memory,  
Lost now on earth, a lasting monument,  
And graven on it shall recorded be  
That all her rays to light mankind were spent ;  
And I will sing albeit none heedeth me,  
On her exemplar being still intent :  
While in men's sight shall stand the record thus—  
"So long as she did last she lighted us."'

So said, he raised, according to his vow,  
On the green grass, where oft his townsfolk met,  
Under the shadow of a leafy bough  
That leaned toward a singing rivulet,  
One pure white stone, whereon, like crown on brow,  
The image of the vanished star was set ;  
And this was graven on the pure white stone  
In golden letters—'WHILE SHE LIVED SHE SHONE.'



Madam, I cannot give this story well—  
 My heart is beating to another chime ;  
 My voice must needs a different cadence swell ;  
 It is yon singing bird, which all the time  
 Wooeth his nested mate, that doth dispel  
 My thoughts. What, deem you, could a lover's rhyme  
 The sweetness of that passionate lay excel ?  
 O soft, O low her voice—' I cannot tell.'

[*He thinks.*]

The old man—aye he spoke, he was not hard ;  
 ' She was his joy,' he said, ' his comforter,  
 But he would trust me. I was not debarred  
 Whate'er my heart approved to say to her.'  
 Approved ! O torn and tempted and ill-starred  
 And breaking heart, approve not nor demur ;  
 It is the serpent that beguileth thee  
 With ' God doth know ' beneath this apple-tree.

Yea, God DOETH know, and only God doth know.  
 Have pity, God, my spirit groans to Thee !  
 I bear Thy curse primeval, and I go ;  
 But heavier than on Adam falls on me  
 My tillage of the wilderness ; for lo,  
 I leave behind the woman, and I see  
 As 't were the gates of Eden closing o'er  
 To hide her from my sight for evermore.



[*He speaks.*]

I am a fool, with sudden start he cried,  
To let the song-bird work me such unrest :  
If I break off again, I pray you chide,  
For morning fleeteth, with my tale at best  
Half told. That white stone, Madam, gleamed beside  
The little rivulet, and all men pressed  
To read the lost one's story traced thereon,  
The golden legend—' While she lived she shone.'

And, Madam, when the Poet heard them read,  
And children spell the letters softly through,  
It may be that he felt at heart some need,  
Some craving to be thus remembered too ;  
It may be that he wondered if indeed  
He must die wholly when he passed from view ;  
It may be, wished when death his eyes made dim,  
That some kind hand would raise such stone for him.

But shortly, as there comes to most of us,  
There came to him the need to quit his home :  
To tell you why were simply hazardous.  
What said I, Madam?—men were made to roam  
My meaning is. It hath been always thus :  
They are athirst for mountains and sea foam ;  
Heirs of this world, what wonder if perchance  
They long to see their grand inheritance ?

He left his city, and went forth to teach  
Mankind, his peers, the hidden harmony  
That underlies God's discords, and to reach  
And touch the master-string that like a sigh  
Thrills in their souls, as if it would beseech  
Some hand to sound it, and to satisfy  
Its yearning for expression : but no word  
Till poet touch it hath to make its music heard.

[*He thinks.*]

I know that God is good, though evil dwells  
Among us, and doth all things holiest share ;  
That there is joy in heaven, while yet our knells  
Sound for the souls which He has summoned there ;  
That painful love unsatisfied hath spells  
Earned by its smart to soothe its fellow's care :  
But yet this atom cannot in the whole  
Forget itself—it aches a separate soul.

[*He speaks.*]

But, Madam, to my Poet I return.  
With his sweet cadences of woven words,  
He made their rude untutored hearts to burn  
And melt like gold refined. No brooding birds  
Sing better of the love that doth sojourn  
Hid in the nest of home, which softly girds  
The beating heart of life ; and, strait though it be,  
Is straitness better than wide liberty.

He taught them, and they learned, but not the less  
Remained unconscious whence that lore they drew,  
But dreamed that of their native nobleness  
Some lofty thoughts that he had planted, grew ;  
His glorious maxims in a lowly dress  
Like seed sown broadcast sprang in all men's view.  
The sower, passing onward, was not known,  
And all men reaped the harvest as their own.

It may be, Madam, that those ballads sweet,  
Whose rhythmic words we sang but yesterday,  
Which time and changes make not obsolete,  
But (as a river blossoms bears away  
That on it drop) take with them while they fleet—  
It may be his they are, from him bear sway :  
But who can tell, since work surviveth fame?—  
The rhyme is left, but lost the Poet's name.

He worked, and bravely he fulfilled his trust —  
So long he wandered sowing worthy seed,  
Watering of wayside buds that were adust,  
And touching for the common ear his reed—  
So long to wear away the cankered rust  
That dulls the gold of life—so long to plead  
With sweetest music for all souls oppressed,  
That he was old ere he had thought of rest.

Old and grey-headed, leaning on a staff,  
    To that great city of his birth he came,  
And at its gates he paused with wondering laugh  
    To think how changed were all his thoughts of fame  
Since first he carved the golden epitaph  
    To keep in memory a worthy name,  
And thought forgetfulness had been its doom  
But for a few bright letters on a tomb.

The old Astronomer had long since died ;  
    The friends of youth were gone and far dispersed ;  
Strange were the domes that rose on every side ;  
    Strange fountains on his wondering vision burst ;  
The men of yesterday their business plied ;  
    No face was left that he had known at first ;  
And in the city gardens, lo, he sees  
The saplings that he set are stately trees.

Upon the grass beneath their welcome shade,  
    Behold ! he marks the fair white monument,  
And on its face the golden words displayed,  
    For sixty years their lustre have not spent ;  
He sitteth by it and is not afraid,  
    But in its shadow he is well content ;  
And envies not, though bright their gleamings are,  
The golden letters of the vanished star.

He gazeth up ; exceeding bright appears  
That golden legend to his aged eyes,  
For they are dazzled till they fill with tears,  
And his lost Youth doth like a vision rise ;  
She saith to him, ' In all these toilsome years,  
What hast thou won by work or enterprise ?  
What hast thou won to make amends to thee,  
As thou didst swear to do, for loss of me ?

' O man ! O white-haired man ! ' the vision said,  
' Since we two sat beside this monument  
Life's clearest hues are all evanishèd ;  
The golden wealth thou hadst of me is spent ;  
The wind hath swept thy flowers, their leaves are shed ;  
The music is played out that with thee went.'  
' Peace, peace ! ' he cried ; ' I lost thee, but, in truth,  
There are worse losses than the loss of youth.'

He said not what those losses were—but I—  
But I must leave them, for the time draws near.  
Some lose not ONLY joy, but memory  
Of how it felt : not love that was so dear  
Lose only, but the steadfast certainty  
That once they had it ; doubt comes on, then fear,  
And after that despondency. I wis  
The Poet must have meant such loss as this.

But while he sat and pondered on his youth,  
He said, 'It did one deed that doth remain,  
For it preserved the memory and the truth  
Of her that now doth neither set nor wane,  
But shine in all men's thought ; nor sink forsooth,  
And be forgotten like the summer rain.  
O, it is good that man should not forget  
Or benefits foregone or brightness set !'

He spoke and said, 'My lot contenteth me ;  
I am right glad for this her worthy fame ;  
That which was good and great I fain would see  
Drawn with a halo round what rests—a name.'  
This while the Poet said, behold there came  
A workman with his tools anear the tree,  
And when he read the words he paused awhile  
And pondered on them with a wondering smile.

And then he said, 'I pray you, Sir, what mean  
The golden letters of this monument ?'  
In wonder quoth the Poet, 'Hast thou been  
A dweller near at hand, and their intent  
Hast neither heard by voice of fame, nor seen  
The marble earlier ?' 'Ay,' said he, and leant  
Upon his spade to hear the tale, then sigh,  
And say it was a marvel, and pass by.

Then said the Poet, 'This is strange to me.'

But as he mused, with trouble in his mind,  
A band of maids approached him leisurely,

Like vessels sailing with a favouring wind ;  
And of their rosy lips requested he,

As one that for a doubt would solving find,  
The tale, if tale there were, of that white stone,  
And those fair letters—'While she lived she shone.'

Then like a fleet that floats becalmed they stay.

'O, Sir,' saith one, 'this monument is old ;  
But we have heard our virtuous mothers say

That by their mothers thus the tale was told :  
A Poet made it ; journeying then away,

He left us ; and though some the meaning hold  
For other than the ancient one, yet we  
Receive this legend for a certainty :—

'There was a lily once, most purely white,

Beneath the shadow of these boughs it grew ;  
Its starry blossom it unclosed by night,

And a young Poet loved its shape and hue.  
He watched it nightly, 't was so fair a sight,

Until a stormy wind arose and blew,  
And when he came once more his flower to greet,  
Its fallen petals drifted to his feet.



‘ And for his beautiful white lily’s sake,  
That she might be remembered where her scent  
Had been right sweet, he said that he would make  
In her dear memory a monument :  
For she was purer than a driven flake  
Of snow, and in her grace most excellent ;  
The loveliest life that death did ever mar,  
As beautiful to gaze on as a star.’

‘ I thank you, maid,’ the Poet answered her,  
‘ And I am glad that I have heard your tale.’  
With that they passed ; and as an inlander,  
Having heard breakers raging in a gale,  
And falling down in thunder, will aver  
That still, when far away in grassy vale,  
He seems to hear those seething waters bound,  
So in his ears the maiden’s voice did sound.

He leaned his face upon his hand, and thought  
And thought, until a youth came by that way ;  
And once again of him the Poet sought  
The story of the star. But, well-a-day !  
He said, ‘ The meaning with much doubt is fraught,  
The sense thereof can no man surely say ;  
For still tradition sways the common ear,  
That of a truth a star DID DISAPPEAR.



‘ But they who look beneath the outer shell  
That wraps the “ kernel of the people’s lore,”  
Hold THAT for superstition ; and they tell  
That seven lovely sisters dwelt of yore  
In this old city, where it so befell  
That one a Poet loved ; that, furthermore,  
As stars above us she was pure and good,  
And fairest of that beauteous sisterhood.

‘ So beautiful they were, those virgins seven,  
That all men called them clustered stars in song,  
Forgetful that the stars abide in heaven :  
But woman bideth not beneath it long ;  
For O, alas ! alas ! one fated even,  
When stars their azure deeps began to throng,  
That virgin’s eyes of Poet loved waxed dim,  
And all their lustrous shining waned to him.

‘ In summer dusk she drooped her head and sighed  
Until what time the evening star went down,  
And all the other stars did shining bide .  
Clear in the lustre of their old renown,  
And then—the virgin laid her down and died :  
Forgot her youth, forgot her beauty’s crown,  
Forgot the sisters whom she loved before  
And broke her Poet’s heart for evermore.’

' A mournful tale, in sooth,' the lady saith :  
     ' But did he truly grieve for evermore ?'  
 ' It may be you forget,' he answereth,  
     ' That this is but a fable at the core  
 O' the other fable.' ' Though it be but breath,'  
     She asketh, ' was it true ?' Then he, ' This lore,  
 Since it is fable, either way may go ;  
 Then, if it please you, think it might be so.'

' Nay, but,' she saith, ' if I had told your tale,  
     The virgin should have lived his home to bless,  
 Or, must she die, I would have made to fail  
     His useless love.' ' I tell you not the less,'  
 He sighs, ' because it was of no avail :  
     His heart the Poet would not dispossess  
 Thereof. But let us leave the fable now.  
 My Poet heard it with an aching brow.

And he made answer thus : ' I thank thee, youth ;  
     Strange is thy story to these aged ears,  
 But I bethink me thou hast told a truth  
     Under the guise of fable. If my tears,  
 Thou lost belovèd star, lost now, forsooth  
     Indeed, could bring thee back among thy peers,  
 So new thou shouldst be deemed as newly seen,  
 For men forget that thou hast ever been.

'There was a morning when I longed for fame,  
There was a noontide when I passed it by,  
There is an evening when I think not shame  
Its substance and its being to deny ;  
For if men bear in mind great deeds, the name  
Of him that wrought them shall they leave to die ;  
Or if his name they shall have deathless writ,  
They change the deeds that first ennobled it.

'O golden letters of this monument !  
O words to celebrate a loved renown  
Lost now or wrested ! and to fancies lent,  
Or on a fabled forehead set for crown ;  
For my departed star, I am content,  
Though legends dim and years her memory drown :  
For nought were fame to her, compared and set  
By this great truth which ye make lustrous yet.'

Adieu !' the Poet said, ' my vanished star,  
Thy duty and thy happiness were one.  
Work is heaven's hest ; its fame is sublunar :  
The fame thou dost not need—the work is done.  
For thee I am content that these things are ;  
More than content were I, my race being run,  
Might it be true of me, though none thereon  
Should muse regretful—"While he lived he shone."'

So said, the Poet rose and went his way,  
And that same lot he proved whereof he spake.  
Madam, my story is told out ; the day  
Draws out her shadows, time doth overtake  
The morning. That which endeth call a lay,  
Sung after pause—a motto in the break  
Between two chapters of a tale not new,  
Nor joyful—but a common tale. Adieu !

And that same God who made your face so fair,  
And gave your woman's heart its tenderness,  
So shield the blessing He implanted there,  
That it may never turn to your distress,  
And never cost you trouble or despair,  
Nor granted leave the granter comfortless ;  
But like a river blest where'er it flows,  
Be still receiving while it still bestows.

Adieu, he said, and paused, while she sat mute  
In the soft shadow of the apple-tree ;  
The skylark's song rang like a joyous flute,  
The brook went prattling past her restlessly :  
She let their tongues be her tongue's substitute ;  
It was the wind that sighed, it was not she :  
And what the lark, the brook, the wind, had said,  
We cannot tell, for none interpreted.

Their counsels might be hard to reconcile,  
They might not suit the moment or the spot.  
She rose, and laid her work aside the while  
Down in the sunshine of that grassy plot ;  
She looked upon him with an almost smile,  
And held to him a hand that faltered not.  
One moment—bird and brook went warbling on,  
And the wind sighed again—and he was gone.

So quietly, as if she heard no more  
Or skylark in the azure overhead,  
Or water slipping past the cressy shore,  
Or wind that rose in sighs, and sighing fled—  
So quietly, until the alders hoar  
Took him beneath them ; till the downward spread  
Of planes engulfed him in their leafy seas —  
She stood beneath her rose-flushed apple-trees.

And then she stooped toward the mossy grass,  
And gathered up her work and went her way ;  
Straight to that ancient turret she did pass,  
And startle back some fawns that were at play.  
She did not sigh, she never said ' Alas ! '

Although he was her friend : but still that day,  
Where elm and hornbeam spread a towering dome,  
She crossed the dells to her ancestral home.

And did she love him?—what if she did not?

Then home was still the home of happiest years ;  
Nor thought was exiled to partake his lot,

Nor heart lost courage through foreboding fears ;  
Nor echo did against her secret plot,

Nor music her betray to painful tears ;  
Nor life become a dream, and sunshine dim,  
And riches poverty, because of him.

But did she love him?—what and if she did?

Love cannot cool the burning Austral sand,  
Nor show the secret waters that lie hid

In arid valleys of that desert land.

Love has no spells can scorching winds forbid,

Or bring the help which tarries near to hand,  
Or spread a cloud for curtaining faded eyes  
That gaze up dying into alien skies.





*A DEAD YEAR.*



TOOK a year out of my life and story—  
A dead year, and said, ‘I will hew thee a  
tomb!

“All the kings of the nations lie in glory;”

Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom ;  
Swathed in linen, and precious unguents old ;  
Painted with cinnabar, and rich with gold.

‘Silent they rest, in solemn salvatory,  
Sealed from the moth and the owl and the flittermouse—  
Each with his name on his brow.

“All the kings of the nations lie in glory,  
Every one in his own house :”

Then why not thou ?

‘Year,’ I said, ‘thou shalt not lack  
Bribes to bar thy coming back ;  
Doth old Egypt wear her best  
In the chambers of her rest ?



Doth she take to her last bed  
Beaten gold, and glorious red?  
Envy not ! for thou wilt wear  
In the dark a shroud as fair ;  
Golden with the sunny ray  
Thou withdrawest from my day ;  
Wrought upon with colours fine  
Stolen from this life of mine :  
Like the dusty Libyan kings,  
Lie with two wide-open wings  
On thy breast, as if to say,  
On these wings hope flew away ;  
And so housed, and thus adorned,  
Not forgotten, but not scorned,  
Let the dark for evermore  
Close thee when I close the door ;  
And the dust for ages fall  
In the creases of thy pall ;  
And no voice nor visit rude  
Break thy sealèd solitude.'

I took the year out of my life and story,  
The dead year, and said, 'I have hewed thee a tomb !  
"All the kings of the nations lie in glory,"  
Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom ;  
But for the sword, and the sceptre, and diadem,  
Sure thou didst reign like them.'



So I laid her with those tyrants old and hoary,  
According to my vow ;  
For I said, ' The kings of the nations lie in glory,  
And so shalt thou !'

' Rock,' I said, ' thy ribs are strong,  
That I bring thee guard it long ;  
Hide the light from buried eyes—  
Hide it, lest the dead arise.'  
' Year,' I said, and turned away,  
' I am free of thee this day ;  
All that we two only know,  
I forgive and I forego,  
So thy face no more I meet  
In the field or in the street.'

Thus we parted, she and I ;  
Life hid death, and put it by ;  
Life hid death, and said, ' Be free !  
I have no more need of thee.'  
No more need ! O mad mistake,  
With repentance in its wake !  
Ignorant, and rash, and blind,  
Life had left the grave behind ;  
But had locked within its hold,  
With the spices and the gold,  
All she had to keep her warm  
In the raging of the storm.

Scarce the sunset bloom was gone,  
And the little stars outshone,  
Ere the dead year, stiff and stark,  
Drew me to her in the dark ;  
Death drew life to come to her,  
Beating at her sepulchre,  
Crying out, ' How can I part  
With the best share of my heart ?  
Lo, it lies upon the bier,  
Captive, with the buried year.  
O my heart ! ' And I fell prone,  
Weeping at the sealèd stone ;  
' Year among the shades,' I said,  
' Since I live, and thou art dead,  
Let my captive heart be free  
Like a bird to fly to me.'  
And I stayed some voice to win,  
But none answered from within ;  
And I kissed the door—and night  
Deepened till the stars waxed bright ;  
And I saw them set and wane.  
And the world turned green again.

' So,' I whispered, ' open door,  
I must tread this palace floor—  
Sealèd palace, rich and dim.  
Let a narrow sunbeam swim

---

After me, and on me spread  
While I look upon my dead ;  
Let a little warmth be free  
To come after ; let me see  
Through the doorway, when I sit  
Looking out, the swallows flit,  
Settling not till daylight goes ;  
Let me smell the wild white rose,  
Smell the woodbine and the may ;  
Mark, upon a sunny day,  
Sated from their blossoms rise  
Honey-bees and butterflies.  
Let me hear, O ! let me hear,  
Sitting by my buried year,  
Finches chirping to their young,  
And the little noises flung  
Out of clefts where rabbits play,  
Or from falling water-spray ;  
And the gracious echoes woke  
By man's work : the woodman's stroke,  
Shout of shepherd, whistlings blithe,  
And the whetting of the scythe ;  
Let this be, lest, shut and furled  
From the well-belovèd world,  
I forget her yearnings old,  
And her troubles manifold,  
Strivings sore, submissions meet,  
And my pulse no longer beat,

Keeping time and bearing part  
With the pulse of her great heart.

So ! swing open door, and shade  
Take me : I am not afraid,  
For the time will not be long ;  
Soon I shall have waxen strong—  
Strong enough my own to win  
From the grave it lies within.’

And I entered. On her bier  
Quiet lay the buried year ;  
I sat down where I could see  
Life without and sunshine free,  
Death within. And I between,  
Waited my own heart to wean  
From the shroud that shaded her  
In the rock-hewn sepulchre—  
Waited till the dead should say,  
‘ Heart, be free of me this day’—  
Waited with a patient will—  
AND I WAIT BETWEEN THEM STILL.

I take the year back to my life and story,  
‘The dead year, and say, ‘ I will share in thy tomb.  
“ All the kings of the nations lie in glory ;”  
Cased in cedar, and shut in a sacred gloom !

They reigned in their lifetime with sceptre and diadem,  
But thou excellest them ;  
For life doth make thy grave her oratory,  
And the crown is still on thy brow ;  
“ All the kings of the nations lie in glory,”  
And so dost thou.’





## REFLECTIONS.

*Looking over the Gate at a Pool in a Field.*

**W**HAT change has made the pastures sweet  
And reached the daisies at my feet,  
And cloud that wears a golden hem ?  
This lovely world, the hills, the sward—  
They all look fresh, as if our Lord  
But yesterday had finished them.

And here 's the field with light aglow ;  
How fresh its boundary lime-trees show,  
And how its wet leaves trembling shine !  
Between their trunks come through to me  
The morning sparkles of the sea  
Below the level browsing line.

I see the pool more clear by half  
Than pools where other waters laugh  
Up at the breasts of coot and rail.

There, as she passed it on her way,  
I saw reflected yesterday  
    A maiden with a milking-pail.

There, neither slowly nor in haste,  
One hand upon her slender waist,  
    The other lifted to her pail,  
She rosy in the morning light,  
Among the water-daisies white,  
    Like some fair sloop appeared to sail.

Against her ankles as she trod,  
The lucky buttercups did nod.  
    I leaned upon the gate to see :  
The sweet thing looked, but did not speak ;  
A dimple came in either cheek,  
    And all my heart was gone from me.

Then, as I lingered on the gate,  
And she came up like coming fate,  
    I saw my picture in her eyes—  
Clear dancing eyes, more black than sloes.  
Cheeks like the mountain pink, that grows  
    Among white-headed majesties.

I said, ' A tale was made of old  
That I would fain to thee unfold ;  
    Ah ! let me--let me tell the tale.'

But high she held her comely head ;  
' I cannot heed it now,' she said,  
    ' For carrying of the milking-pail.'

She laughed. What good to make ado ?  
I held the gate, and she came through,  
    And took her homeward path anon.  
From the clear pool her face had fled ;  
It rested on my heart instead,  
    Reflected when the maid was gone.

With happy youth, and work content,  
So sweet and stately on she went,  
    Right careless of the untold tale.  
Each step she took I loved her more,  
And followed to her dairy door  
    The maiden with the milking-pail.

## II

For hearts where wakened love doth lurk,  
How fine, how blest a thing is work !  
    For work does good when reasons fail—  
Good ; yet the axe at every stroke  
The echo of a name awoke—  
    Her name is Mary Martindale.



I'm glad that echo was not heard  
Arigh by other men : a bird  
    Knows doubtless what his own notes tell ;  
And I know not, but I can say  
I felt as shame-faced all that day  
    As if folks heard her name right well.

And when the west began to glow  
I went—I could not choose but go—  
    To that same dairy on the hill ;  
And while sweet Mary moved about  
Within, I came to her without,  
    And leaned upon the window-sill.

The garden border where I stood  
Was sweet with pinks and southernwood ;  
    I spoke—her answer seemed to fail :  
I smelt the pinks—I could not see ;  
The dusk came down and sheltered me,  
    And in the dusk she heard my tale.

And what is left that I should tell?  
I begged a kiss, I pleaded well :  
    The rosebud lips did long decline ;  
But yet I think, I think 't is true,  
That, leaned at last into the dew,  
    One little instant they were mine.

O life ! how dear thou hast become !  
She laughed at dawn, and I was dumb,  
    But evening counsels best prevail.  
Fair shine the blue that o'er her spreads,  
Green be the pastures where she treads,  
    The maiden with the milking-pail !





*THE LETTER L.*

ABSENT.



WE sat on grassy slopes that meet  
With sudden dip the level strand ;  
The trees hung overhead—our feet  
Were on the sand.

Two silent girls, a thoughtful man,  
We sunned ourselves in open light,  
And felt such April airs as fan  
The Isle of Wight ;

And smelt the wall-flower in the crag  
Whereon that dainty waft had fed,  
Which made the bell-hung cowslip wag  
Her delicate head ;

And let alighting jackdaws fleet  
Adown it open-winged, and pass  
Till they could touch with outstretched feet  
The warmèd grass.

The happy wave ran up and rang  
Like service bells a long way off,  
And down a little freshet sprang  
From mossy trough,

And splashed into a rain of spray,  
And fretted on with daylight's loss,  
Because so many bluebells lay  
Leaning across.

Blue martins gossiped in the sun,  
And pairs of chattering daws flew by.  
And sailing brigs rocked softly on  
In company.

Wild cherry boughs above us spread  
The whitest shade was ever seen,  
And flicker, flicker, came and fled  
Sun spots between.

Bees murmured in the milk-white bloom  
As babes will sigh for deep content  
When their sweet hearts for peace make room,  
As given, not lent.

And we saw on : we said no word,  
And one was lost in musings rare,  
One buoyant as the waft that stirred  
Her shining hair.

His eyes were bent upon the sand ;  
Unfathomed deeps within them lay.  
A slender rod was in his hand—  
A hazel spray.

Her eyes were resting on his face,  
As shyly glad, by stealth to glean  
Impressions of his manly grace  
And guarded mien ;

The mouth with steady sweetness set,  
And eyes conveying unaware  
The distant hint of some regret  
That harboured there.

She gazed, and in the tender flush  
That made her face like roses blown,  
And in the radiance and the hush,  
Her thought was shown.

It was a happy thing to sit  
So near, nor mar his reverie ;  
She looked not for a part in it,  
So meek was she.

But it was solace for her eyes,  
And for her heart, that yearned to him,  
To watch apart in loving wise  
Those musings dim.

Lost—lost, and gone ! The Pelham woods  
Were full of doves that cooed at ease ;  
The orchis filled her purple hoods  
For dainty bees.

He heard not ; all the delicate air  
Was fresh with falling water-spray :  
It mattered not—he was not there,  
But far away.

Till with the hazel in his hand,  
Still drowned in thought, it thus befell :  
He drew a letter on the sand—  
The letter L.

And looking on it, straight there wrought  
A ruddy flush about his brow ;  
His letter woke him : absent thought  
Rushed homeward now.

And half-abashed, his hasty touch  
Effaced it with a tell-tale care,  
As if his action had been much,  
And not his air.

And she ? she watched his open palm  
Smooth out the letter from the sand,  
And rose, with aspect almost calm,  
And filled her hand

With cherry bloom, and moved away  
To gather wild forget-me-not,  
And let her errant footsteps stray  
To one sweet spot,

As if she coveted the fair  
White lining of the silver-weed,  
And cuckoo-pint that shaded there  
Empurpled seed.

She had not feared, as I divine,  
Because she had not hoped. Alas !  
The sorrow of it ! for that sign  
Came but to pass ;

And yet it robbed her of the right  
To give, who looked not to receive,  
And made her blush in love's despite  
That she should grieve.

A shape in white, she turned to gaze ;  
Her eyes were shaded with her hand,  
And half-way up the winding ways  
We saw her stand.

Green hollows of the fringed cliff,  
Red rocks that under waters show,  
Blue reaches, and a sailing skiff,  
Were spread below.

She stood to gaze, perhaps to sigh,  
Perhaps to think ; but who can tell,  
How heavy on her heart must lie  
The letter L !

---

She came anon with quiet grace ;  
And 'What,' she murmured, 'silent yet !'  
He answered, 'T is a haunted place,  
And spell-beset.

'O speak to us, and break the spell !'  
'The spell is broken,' she replied.  
'I crossed the running brook, it fell,  
It could not bide.

'And I have brought a budding world,  
Of orchis spires and daisies rank,  
And ferny plumes but half uncurled,  
From yonder bank ;

'And I shall weave of them a crown,  
And at the well-head launch it free,  
That so the brook may float it down,  
And out to sea.



‘There may it to some English hands  
From fairy meadow seem to come ;  
The fairiest of fairy lands—  
The land of home.’

‘Weave on,’ he said, and as she wove  
We told how currents in the deep,  
With branches from a lemon grove,  
Blue bergs will sweep ;

And messages from shipwrecked folk  
Will navigate the moon-led main,  
And painted boards of splintered oak  
Their port regain.

Then floated out by vagrant thought,  
My soul beheld on torrid sand  
The wasteful water set at nought  
Man’s skilful hand,

And suck out gold-dust from the box,  
And wash it down in weedy whirls,  
And split the wine-keg on the rocks,  
And lose the pearls.

‘Ah ! why to that which needs it not,’  
Methought, ‘should costly things be given ?  
How much is wasted, wrecked, forgot,  
On this side heaven !’

So musing, did mine ears awake  
    To maiden tones of sweet reserve,  
And manly speech that seemed to make  
    The steady curve

Of lips that uttered it defer  
    Their guard, and soften for the thought :  
She listened, and his talk with her  
    Was fancy-fraught.

‘ There is not much in liberty ’—  
    With doubtful pauses he began ;  
And said to her and said to me,  
    ‘ There was a man—

‘ There was a man who dreamed one night  
    That his dead father came to him ;  
And said, when fire was low, and light  
    Was burning dim—

“ Why vagrant thus, my sometime pride,  
    Unloved, unloving, wilt thou roam ?  
Sure home is best ! ” The son replied,  
    “ I have no home.”

“ Shall not I speak ? ” his father said,  
    “ Who early chose a youthful wife,  
And worked for her, and with her led  
    My happy life.

- 
- “ Ay, I will speak, for I was young  
As thou art now, when I did hold  
The prattling sweetness of thy tongue  
Dearer than gold ;
- “ And rosy from thy noonday sleep  
Would bear thee to admiring kin,  
And all thy pretty looks would keep  
My heart within.
- “ Then after, 'mid thy young allies—  
For thee ambition flushed my brow—  
I coveted the schoolboy prize  
Far more than thou.
- “ I thought for thee, I thought for all  
My gamesome imps that round me grew :  
The dews of blessing heaviest fall  
Where care falls too.
- “ And I that sent my boys away,  
In youthful strength to earn their bread,  
And died before the hair was grey  
Upon my head—
- “ I say to thee, though free from care,  
A lonely lot, an aimless life,  
The crowning comfort is not there—  
Son, take a wife.”

- “ Father beloved,” the son replied,  
And failed to gather to his breast,  
With arms in darkness searching wide,  
The formless guest.
- “ I am but free, as sorrow is,  
To dry her tears, to laugh, to talk ;  
And free, as sick men are, I wis,  
To rise and walk.
- “ And free, as poor men are, to buy  
If they have nought wherewith to pay ;  
Nor hope, the debt before they die,  
To wipe away.
- “ What ’vails it there are wives to win,  
And faithful hearts for those to yearn,  
Who find not aught thereto akin  
To make return ?
- “ Shall he take much who little gives,  
And dwells in spirit far away,  
When she that in his presence lives,  
Doth never stray,
- “ But waking, guideth as beseems  
The happy house in order trim,  
And tends her babes ; and sleeping, dreams  
Of them, and him ?

“ O base, O cold,”—while thus he spake  
The dream broke off, the vision fled ;  
He carried on his speech awake  
And sighing said—

“ I had—ah happy man !—I had  
A precious jewel in my breast,  
And while I kept it I was glad  
At work, at rest !

“ Call it a heart, and call it strong  
As upward stroke of eagle’s wing ;  
Then call it weak, you shall not wrong  
The beating thing.

“ In tangles of the jungle reed,  
Whose heats are lit with tiger eyes,  
In shipwreck drifting with the weed  
’Neath rainy skies,

“ Still youthful manhood, fresh and keen,  
At danger gazed with awed delight,  
As if sea would not drown, I ween,  
Nor serpent bite.

“ I had—ah happy ! but ’t is gone,  
The priceless jewel ; one came by,  
And saw and stood awhile to con  
With curious eye,

“ And wished for it, and faintly smiled  
From under lashes black as doom,  
With subtle sweetness, tender, mild,  
That did illumè

“ The perfect face, and shed on it  
A charm, half feeling, half surprise,  
And brim with dreams the exquisite  
Brown blessèd eyes.

“ Was it for this, no more but this,  
I took and laid it in her hand,  
By dimples ruled, to hint submiss,  
By frown unmanned ?

“ It was for this—and O farewell  
The fearless foot, the present mind,  
And steady will to breast the swell  
And face the wind !

“ I gave the jewel from my breast,  
She played with it a little while  
As I sailed down into the west,  
Fed by her smile ;

“ Then weary of it—far from land,  
With sigh as deep as destiny,  
She let it drop from her fair hand  
Into the sea

“ And watched it sink ; and I—and I,—  
    What shall I do, for all is vain ?  
No wave will bring, no gold will buy,  
    No toil attain ;

“ Nor any diver reach to raise  
    My jewel from the blue abyss ;  
Or could they, still I should but praise  
    Their work amiss.

“ Thrown, thrown away ! But I love yet  
    The fair, fair hand which did the deed :  
That wayward sweetness to forget  
    Were bitter meed.

“ No, let it lie, and let the wave  
    Roll over it for evermore ;  
Whelmed where the sailor hath his grave—  
    The sea her store.

“ My heart, my sometime happy heart !  
    And O for once let me complain,  
I must forego life's better part—  
    Man's dearer gain.

“ I worked afar that I might rear  
    A peaceful home on English soil ;  
I laboured for the gold and gear—  
    I loved my toil.

- “ For ever in my spirit spake  
The natural whisper, ‘ Well ’t will be  
When loving wife and children break  
Their bread with thee ! ’
- “ The gathered gold is turned to dross,  
The wife hath faded into air,  
My heart is thrown away, my loss  
I cannot spare.
- “ Not spare unsated thought her food—  
No, not one rustle of the fold,  
Nor scent of eastern sandalwood,  
Nor gleam of gold ;
- “ Nor quaint devices of the shawl,  
Far less the drooping lashes meek :  
The gracious figure, lithe and tall,  
The dimpled cheek ;
- “ And all the wonders of her eyes,  
And sweet caprices of her air,  
Albeit, indignant reason cries,  
Fool ! have a care.
- “ Fool ! join not madness to mistake ;  
Thou knowest she loved thee not a whit ;  
Only that she thy heart might break—  
She wanted it,



- “ Only the conquered thing to chain  
So fast that none might set it free,  
Nor other woman there might reign  
And comfort thee.
- “ Robbed, robbed of life’s illusions sweet ;  
Love dead outside her closed door,  
And passion fainting at her feet  
To wake no more ;
- “ What canst thou give that unknown bride  
Whom thou didst work for in the waste,  
Ere fated love was born, and cried—  
Was dead, ungraced ?
- “ No more but this, the partial care,  
The natural kindness for its own,  
The trust that waxeth unaware,  
As worth is known :
- “ Observance, and complacent thought  
Indulgent, and the honour due  
That many another man has brought  
Who brought love too.
- “ Nay, then, forbid it Heaven ! ” he said,  
“ The saintly vision fades from me ;  
O bands and chains ! I cannot wed—  
I am not free. ”

With that he raised his face to view ;  
‘ What think you,’ asking, ‘ of my tale ?  
And was he right to let the dew  
Of morn exhale,

‘ And burdened in the noontide sun,  
The grateful shade of home forego —  
Could he be right?—I ask as one  
Who fain would know.’

He spoke to her and spoke to me ;  
The rebel rose-hue dyed her cheek ;  
The woven crown lay on her knee ;  
She would not speak.

And I with doubtful pause—averse  
To let occasion drift away—  
I answered—‘ If his case were worse  
Than word can say,

‘ Time is a healer of sick hearts,  
And women have been known to choose,  
With purpose to allay their smarts,  
And tend their bruise,

‘ These for themselves. Content to give,  
In their own lavish love complete,  
Taking for sole prerogative  
Their tendance sweet.

- ‘Such meeting in their diadem  
Of crowning love’s æthereal fire,  
Himself he robs who robbeth them  
Of their desire.
- ‘Therefore the man who, dreaming, cried  
Against his lot that evensong,  
I judge him honest, and decide  
That he was wrong.’
- ‘When I am judged, ah may my fate,  
He whispered, ‘in thy code be read!  
Be thou both judge and advocate.’  
Then turned, he said—
- ‘Fair weaver!’ touching, while he spoke,  
‘The woven crown, the weaving hand,  
‘And do you this decree revoke,  
Or may it stand?’
- ‘This friend, you ever think her right—  
She is not wrong, then?’ Soft and low  
The little trembling word took flight:  
She answered, ‘No.’

## PRESENT.

A meadow where the grass was deep.  
Rich, square, and golden to the view,  
A belt of elms with level sweep  
About it grew.

The sun beat down on it, the line  
Of shade was clear beneath the trees ;  
There, by a clustering eglantine,  
We sat at ease.

And O the buttercups ! that field  
O' the cloth of gold, where pennons swam—  
Where France set up his liliated shield,  
His oriflamb,

And Henry's lion-standard rolled :  
What was it to their matchless sheen,  
Their million million drops of gold  
Among the green !

We sat at ease in peaceful trust,  
For he had written, ' Let us meet ;  
My wife grew tired of smoke and dust,  
And London heat,

‘ And I have found a quiet grange,  
Set back in meadows sloping west,  
And there our little ones can range  
And she can rest.

‘ Come down, that we may show the view,  
And she may hear your voice again,  
And talk her woman’s talk with you  
Along the lane.’

Since he had drawn with listless hand  
The letter, six long years had fled,  
And winds had blown about the sand,  
And they were wed.

Two rosy urchins near him played,  
Or watched, entranced, the shapely ships  
That with his knife for them he made  
Of elder slips.

And where the flowers were thickest shed,  
Each blossom like a burnished gem,  
A creeping baby reared its head,  
And cooed at them.

And calm was on the father’s face,  
And love was in the mother’s eyes ;  
She looked and listened from her place,  
In tender wise.

She did not need to raise her voice  
That they might hear, she sat so nigh ;  
Yet we could speak when 't was our choice,  
And soft reply,

Holding our quiet talk apart  
Of household things ; till, all unsealed,  
The guarded outworks of the heart  
Began to yield ;

And much that prudence will not dip  
The pen to fix and send away,  
Passed safely over from the lip  
That summer day.

' I should be happy,' with a look  
Towards her husband where he lay,  
Lost in the pages of his book,  
Soft did she say.

' I am, and yet no lot below  
For one whole day eludeth care ;  
To marriage all the stories flow,  
And finish there :

' As if with marriage came the end,  
The entrance into settled rest,  
The calm to which love's tossings tend,  
The quiet breast.

- ‘ For me love played the low preludes,  
    Yet life began but with the ring,  
Such infinite sollicitudes  
    Around it cling.
- ‘ I did not for my heart divine  
    Her destiny so meek to grow ;  
The higher nature matched with mine  
    Will have it so.
- ‘ Still I consider it, and still  
    Acknowledge it my master made,  
Above me by the steadier will  
    Of nought afraid—
- ‘ Above me by the candid speech ;  
    The temperate judgment of its own :  
The keener thoughts that grasp and reach  
    At things unknown.
- ‘ But I look up and he looks down,  
    And thus our married eyes can meet ;  
Unclouded his, and clear of frown,  
    And gravely sweet.
- ‘ And yet, O good, O wise and true !  
    I would, for all my fealty,  
That I could be as much to you  
    As you to me ;

‘ And knew the deep secure content  
Of wives who have been hardly won,  
And, long petitioned, gave assent,  
Jealous of none ;

‘ But proudly sure in all the earth  
No other in that homage shares,  
Nor other woman’s face or worth  
Is prized as theirs.’

I said : ‘ *And yet no lot below  
For one whole day eludeth care.*  
Your thought.’ She answered, ‘ Even so.  
I would beware

‘ Regretful questionings ; be sure  
That very seldom do they rise,  
Nor for myself do I endure—  
I sympathise.

‘ For once ’—she turned away her head,  
Across the grass she swept her hand—  
‘ There was a letter once,’ she said,  
‘ Upon the sand.’

‘ There was, in truth, a letter writ  
On sand,’ I said, ‘ and swept from view ;  
But that same hand which fashioned it  
Is given to you.



‘ Efface the letter ; wherefore keep  
    An image which the sands forego ?  
‘ Albeit that fear had seemed to sleep,’  
    She answered low,

‘ I could not choose but wake it now ;  
    For do but turn aside your face,  
A house on yonder hilly brow  
    Your eyes may trace.

The chestnut shelters it ; ah me,  
    That I should have so faint a heart !  
But yestereve, as by the sea  
    I sat apart,

‘ I heard a name, I saw a hand  
    Of passing stranger point that way—  
And will he meet her on the strand,  
    When late we stray ?

‘ For she is come, for she is there,  
    I heard it in the dusk, and heard  
Admiring words, that named her fair,  
    But little stirred

‘ By beauty of the wood and wave,  
    And weary of an old man’s sway ;  
For it was sweeter to enslave  
    Than to obey.’

—The voice of one that near us stood,  
The rustle of a silken fold,  
A scent of eastern sandalwood,  
A gleam of gold !

A lady ! In the narrow space  
Between the husband and the wife,  
But nearest him—she showed a face  
With dangers rife ;

A subtle smile that dimpling fled,  
As night-black lashes rose and fell :  
I looked, and to myself I said,  
' The letter L.'

He, too, looked up, and with arrest  
Of breath and motion held his gaze,  
Nor cared to hide within his breast  
His deep amaze ;

Nor spoke till on her near advance  
His dark cheek flushed a ruddier hue ;  
And with his change of countenance  
Hers altered too.

' Lenore !' his voice was like the cry  
Of one entreating ; and he said  
But that—then paused with such a sigh  
As mourns the dead.

And seated near, with no demur  
Of bashful doubt she silence broke,  
Though I alone could answer her  
When first she spoke.

She looked : her eyes were beauty's own ;  
She shed their sweetness into his ;  
Nor spared the married wife one moan  
That bitterest is.

She spoke, and lo, her loveliness  
Methought she damaged with her tongue ;  
And every sentence made it less,  
All falsely rung.

The rallying voice, the light demand,  
Half flippant, half unsatisfied ;  
The vanity sincere and bland—  
The answers wide.

And now her talk was of the East,  
And next her talk was of the sea ;  
' And has the love for it increased  
You shared with me ? '

He answered not, but grave and still  
With earnest eyes her face perused,  
And locked his lips with steady will,  
As one that mused—

That mused and wondered. Why his gaze  
Should dwell on her, methought, was plain ;  
But reason that should wonder raise  
I sought in vain.

And near and near the children drew,  
Attracted by her rich array,  
And gems that trembling into view  
Like raindrops lay.

He spoke : the wife her baby took  
And pressed the little face to hers ;  
What pain soe'er her bosom shook,  
What jealous stirs

Might stab her heart, she hid them so,  
The cooing babe a veil supplied ;  
And if she listened none might know,  
Or if she sighed ;

Or if forecasting grief and care  
Unconscious solace thence she drew,  
And lulled her babe, and unaware  
Lulled sorrow too.

The lady, she interpreter  
For looks or language wanted none,  
If yet dominion stayed with her—  
So lightly won ;

If yet the heart she wounded sore  
    Could yearn to her, and let her see  
The homage that was evermore  
    Disloyalty ;

If sign would yield that it had bled,  
    Or rallied from the faithless blow,  
Or sick or sullen stooped to wed,  
    She craved to know.

Now dreamy deep, now sweetly keen,  
    Her asking eyes would round him shine ;  
But guarded lips and settled mien  
    Refused the sign.

And unbeguiled and unbetrayed,  
    The wonder yet within his breast,  
It seemed a watchful part he played  
    Against her quest.

Until with accent of regret  
    She touched upon the past once more,  
As if she dared him to forget  
    His dream of yore.

And words of little weight let fall  
    The fancy of the lower mind ;  
How waxing life must needs leave all  
    Its best behind ;

How he had said that 'he would fain  
(One morning on the halcyon sea)  
That life would at a stand remain  
Eternally ;

' And sails be mirrored in the deep,  
As then they were, for evermore,  
And happy spirits wake and sleep  
Afar from shore :

' The well-contented heart be fed  
Ever as then, and all the world  
(It were not small) unshadowèd  
When sails were furled.

' Your words '—a pause, and quietly  
With touch of calm self-ridicule :  
' It may be so—for then,' said he,  
' I was a fool.'

With that he took his book, and left  
An awkward silence to my care,  
That soon I filled with questions deft  
And debonair ;

And slid into an easy vein,  
The favourite picture of the year ;  
The grouse upon her lord's domain—  
The salmon weir ;

Till she could feign a sudden thought  
Upon neglected guests, and rise,  
And make us her adieux, with nought  
In her dark eyes

Acknowledging or shame or pain ;  
But just unveiling for our view  
A little smile of still disdain  
As she withdrew.

Then nearer did the sunshine creep,  
And warmer came the wafting breeze ;  
The little babe was fast asleep  
On mother's knees.

Fair was the face that o'er it leant,  
The cheeks with beauteous blushes dyed ;  
The downcast lashes, shyly bent,  
That failed to hide

Some tender shame. She did not see ;  
She felt his eyes that would not stir,  
She looked upon her babe, and he  
So looked at her.

So grave, so wondering, so content,  
As one new waked to conscious life,  
Whose sudden joy with fear is blent,  
He said, 'My wife.'

‘ My wife, how beautiful you are ! ’

Then closer at her side reclined,  
‘ The bold brown woman from afar  
Comes, to me blind.

‘ And by comparison, I see

The majesty of matron grace,  
And learn how pure, how fair can be  
My own wife’s face :

‘ Pure with all faithful passion, fair

With tender smiles that come and go ;  
And comforting as April air  
After the snow.

‘ Fool that I was ! my spirit frets

And marvels at the humbling truth,  
That I have deigned to spend regrets  
On my bruised youth.

‘ Its idol mocked thee, seated nigh,

And shamed me for the mad mistake ;  
I thank my God He could deny,  
And she forsake.

‘ Ah, who am I, that God hath saved

Me from the doom I did desire,  
And crossed the lot myself had craved,  
To set me higher ?



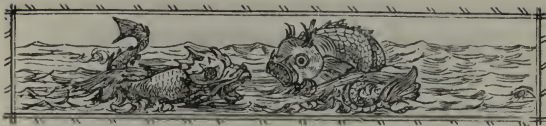
‘What have I done that He should bow  
From heaven to choose a wife for me?  
And what deserved, He should endow  
My home with THEE?’

‘My wife!’ With that she turned her face  
To kiss the hand about her neck;  
And I went down and sought the place  
Where leaped the beck—

The busy beck, that still would run  
And fall, and falter its refrain;  
And pause and shimmer in the sun,  
And fall again.

It led me to the sandy shore,  
We sang together, it and I—  
‘The daylight comes, the dark is o’er,  
The shadows fly.’

I lost it on the sandy shore,  
‘O wife!’ its latest murmurs fell,  
‘O wife, be glad, and fear no more  
The letter L.’



*THE HIGH TIDE ON THE COAST  
OF LINCOLNSHIRE.*

(1571.)

**T**HE old mayor climbed the belfry tower,  
The ringers ran by two, by three ;  
' Pull, if ye never pulled before ;  
Good ringers, pull your best,' quoth he.  
' Play uppe, play uppe, O Boston bells !  
Ply all your changes, all your swells,  
Play uppe " The Brides of Enderby." '

Men say it was a stolen tyde—  
The Lord that sent it, He knows all ;  
But in myne ears doth still abide  
The message that the bells let fall :  
And there was nought of strange, beside  
The flights of mews and peewits pied  
By millions crouched on the old sea wall.

I sat and spun within the doore,  
My thread brake off, I raised myne eyes ;

The level sun, like ruddy ore,  
 Lay sinking in the barren skies,  
 And dark against day's golden death  
 She moved where Lindis wandereth,  
 My sonne's faire wife, Elizabeth.

'Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha !' calling,  
 Ere the early dewes were falling,  
 Farre away I heard her song.  
 'Cusha ! Cusha !' all along  
 Where the reedy Lindis floweth,  
     Floweth, floweth ;  
 From the meads where melick groweth  
 Faintly came her milking song—

'Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha !' calling,  
 'For the dewes will soone be falling ;  
 Leave your meadow grasses mellow,  
     Mellow, mellow ;  
 Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow ;  
 Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,  
 Quit the stalks of parsley hollow,  
     Hollow, hollow ;  
 Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,  
 From the clovers lift your head ;  
 Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,  
 Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,  
 Jetty, to the milking shed.'

If it be long, ay, long ago,  
When I beginne to think howe long,  
Againe I hear the Lindis flow,  
Swift as an arrowe, sharpe and strong ;  
And all the aire, it seemeth mee,  
Bin full of floating bells (sayth shee),  
That ring the tune of Enderby.

Alle fresh the level pasture lay,  
And not a shadowe motè be seene,  
Save where full fyve good miles away  
The steeple towered from out the greene ;  
And lo ! the great bell farre and wide  
Was heard in all the country side  
That Saturday at eventide.

The swanherds where their sedges are  
Moved on in sunset's golden breath,  
The shepherde lads I heard afarre,  
And my sonne's wife, Elizabeth ;  
Till floating o'er the grassy sea  
Came downe that kyndly message free,  
The ' Brides of Mavis Enderby.'

Then some looked uppe into the sky,  
And all along where Lindis flows  
To where the goodly vessels lie,  
And where the lordly steeple shows.

They sayde, ' And why should this thing be ?  
 What danger lowers by land or sea ?  
 They ring the tune of Enderby !

' For evil news from Mablethorpe,  
 Of pyrate.galleys warping down ;  
 For shippes ashore beyond the scorpe,  
 They have not spared to wake the towne :  
 But while the west bin red to see,  
 And storms be none, and pyrates flee,  
 Why ring " The Brides of Enderby " ?'

I looked without, and lo ! my sonne  
 Came riding downe with might and main :  
 He raised a shout as he drew on,  
 Till all the welkin rang again,  
 ' Elizabeth ! Elizabeth !'  
 (A sweeter woman ne'er drew breath  
 Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.)

' The olde sea wall (he cried) is downe,  
 The rising tide comes on apace,  
 And boats adrift in yonder towne  
 Go sailing uppe the market-place.'  
 He shook as one that looks on death :  
 ' God save you, mother !' straight he saith ;  
 ' Where is my wife, Elizabeth ?'

‘ Good sonne, where Lindis winds away,  
With her two bairns I marked her long ;  
And ere yon bells beganne to play  
Afar I heard her milking song.’  
He looked across the grassy lea,  
To right, to left, ‘ Ho Enderby !’  
They rang ‘ The Brides of Enderby !’

With that he cried and beat his breast ;  
For, lo ! along the river’s bed  
A mighty eygre reared his crest,  
And uppe the Lindis raging sped.  
It swept with thunderous noises loud ;  
Shaped like a curling snow-white cloud,  
Or like a demon in a shroud.

And rearing Lindis backward pressed  
Shook all her trembling bankes amaine ;  
Then madly at the eygre’s breast  
Flung uppe her weltering walls again.  
Then bankes came downe with ruin and rout—  
Then beaten foam flew round about—  
Then all the mighty floods were out.

So farre, so fast the eygre drave,  
The heart had hardly time to beat,  
Before a shallow seething wave  
Sobbed in the grasses at oure feet :

The feet had hardly time to flee  
Before it brake against the knee,  
And all the world was in the sea.

Upon the roofe we sate that night,  
The noise of bells went sweeping by ;  
I marked the lofty beacon light  
Stream from the church tower, red and high—  
A lurid mark and dread to see ;  
And awsome bells they were to mee,  
That in the dark rang ' Enderby.'

They rang the sailor lads to guide  
From roofe to roofe who fearless rowed ;  
And I—my sonne was at my side,  
And yet the ruddy beacon glowed ;  
And yet he moaned beneath his breath,  
' O come in life, or come in death !  
O lost ! my love, Elizabeth.'

And didst thou visit him no more ?  
Thou didst, thou didst, my daughter deare ;  
The waters laid thee at his doore,  
Ere yet the early dawn was clear.  
Thy pretty bairns in fast embrace,  
The lifted sun shone on thy face,  
Downe drifted to thy dwelling-place.

That flow strewed wrecks about the grass,  
That ebbe swept out the flocks to sea ;  
A fatal ebbe and flow, alas !  
To manye more than myne and mee :  
But each will mourn his own (she saith),  
And sweeter woman ne'er drew breath  
Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.

I shall never hear her more  
By the reedy Lindis shore,  
' Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha ! ' calling,  
Ere the early dewes be falling ;  
I shall never hear her song,  
' Cusha ! Cusha ! ' all along  
Where the sunny Lindis floweth,  
Goeth, floweth ;  
From the meads where melick groweth,  
When the water winding down,  
Onward floweth to the town.

I shall never see her more  
Where the reeds and rushes quiver,  
Shiver, quiver ;  
Stand beside the sobbing river,  
Sobbing, throbbing, in its falling  
To the sandy lonesome shore ;  
I shall never hear her calling,



Leave your meadow grasses mellow,  
Mellow, mellow ;  
Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow ;  
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot ;  
Quit your pipes of parsley hollow,  
Hollow, hollow ;  
Come uppe Lightfoot, rise and follow ;  
Lightfoot, Whitefoot,  
From your clovers lift the head ;  
Come uppe Jetty, follow, follow,  
Jetty, to the milking shed.





*AFTERNOON AT A PARSONAGE.*

(THE PARSON'S BROTHER, SISTER, AND TWO CHILDREN.)

*Preface.*



WHAT wonder man should fail to stay  
A nurseling wafted from above,  
The growth celestial come astray,  
That tender growth whose name is Love !

It is as if high winds in heaven  
Had shaken the celestial trees,  
And to this earth below had given  
Some feathered seeds from one of these.

O perfect love that 'dureth long !  
Dear growth, that shaded by the palms,  
And breathed on by the angel's song,  
Blooms on in heaven's eternal calms !

How great the task to guard thee here,  
Where wind is rough, and frost is keen,  
And all the ground with doubt and fear  
Is chequered birth and death between !

Space is against thee—it can part ;  
Time is against thee—it can chill ;  
Words—they but render half the heart ;  
Deeds—they are poor to our rich will.

---

*Merton.* Though she had loved me, I had never  
bound

Her beauty to my darkness ; that had been  
Too hard for her. Sadder to look so near  
Into a face all shadow, than to stand  
Aloof, and then withdraw, and afterwards  
Suffer forgetfulness to comfort her.  
I think so, and I loved her ; therefore I  
Have no complaint ; albeit she is not mine :  
And yet—and yet, withdrawing I would fain  
She would have pleaded duty—would have said  
‘ My father wills it ; ’ would have turned away,  
As lingering, or unwillingly ; for then  
She would have done no damage to the past :  
Now she has roughly used it—flung it down  
And brushed its bloom away. If she had said,  
‘ Sir, I have promised ; therefore, lo ! my hand —

Would I have taken it? Ah no ! by all  
Most sacred, no !

I would for my sole share  
Have taken first her recollected blush  
The day I won her ; next her shining tears—  
The tears of our long parting ; and for all  
The rest—her cry, her bitter heart-sick cry,  
That day or night (I know not which it was,  
The days being always night), that darkest night,  
When being led to her I heard her cry,  
' O blind ! blind ! blind ! '

Go with thy chosen mate :  
The fashion of thy going nearly cured  
The sorrow of it. I am yet so weak  
' That half my thoughts go after thee ; but not  
So weak that I desire to have it so.

JESSIE, *seated at the piano, sings.*

When the dimpled water slippeth,  
Full of laughter, on its way,  
And her wing the wagtail dippeth,  
Running by the brink at play ;  
When the poplar leaves atremble  
Turn their edges to the light,  
And the far-up clouds resemble  
Veils of gauze most clear and white ;  
And the sunbeams fall and flatter  
Woodland moss and branches brown,  
And the glossy finches chatter  
Up and down, up and down :

Though the heart be not attending,  
 Having music of her own,  
 On the grass, through meadows wending,  
 It is sweet to walk alone.

When the falling waters utter  
 Something mournful on their way,  
 And departing swallows flutter,  
 Taking leave of bank and brae ;  
 When the chaffinch idly sitteth  
 With her mate upon the sheaves,  
 And the wistful robin flitteth  
 Over beds of yellow leaves ;  
 When the clouds, like ghosts that ponder  
 Evil fate, float by and frown,  
 And the listless wind doth wander  
 Up and down, up and down :  
 Though the heart be not attending,  
 Having sorrows of her own,  
 Through the fields and fallows wending,  
 It is sad to walk alone.

*Merton.* Blind ! blind ! blind !

Oh ! sitting in the dark for evermore,  
 And doing nothing—putting out a hand  
 To feel what lies about me, and to say  
 Not ‘ This is blue or red,’ but ‘ This is cold,  
 And this the sun is shining on, and this  
 I know not till they tell its name to me.’

O that I might behold once more, my God !  
 The shining rulers of the night and day ;  
 Or a star twinkling ; or an almond-tree,  
 Pink with her blossom and alive with bees,

Standing against the azure ! O my sight !  
Lost, and yet living in the sunlit cells  
Of memory—that only lightsome place  
Where lingers yet the dayspring of my youth :  
The years of mourning for thy death are long.

Be kind, sweet memory ! O desert me not !  
For oft thou show'st me lucent opal seas,  
Fringed with their cocoa-palms, and dwarf red crags  
Whereon the placid moon doth 'rest her chin ;'  
For oft by favour of thy visitings  
I feel the dimness of an Indian night,  
And lo ! the sun is coming. Red as rust  
Between the latticed blind his presence burns,  
A ruby ladder running up the wall ;  
And all the dust, printed with pigeons' feet,  
Is reddened, and the crows that stalk anear  
Begin to trail for heat their glossy wings,  
And the red flowers give back at once the dew,  
For night is gone, and day is born so fast,  
And is so strong, that, huddled as in flight,  
The fleeting darkness paleth to a shade,  
And while she calls to sleep and dreams 'Come on,'  
Suddenly waked, the sleepers rub their eyes,  
Which having opened, lo ! she is no more.

O misery and mourning ! I have felt—  
Yes, I have felt like some deserted world

That God had done with, and had cast aside  
 To rock and stagger through the gulfs of space,  
 He never looking on it any more—  
 Untilled, no use, no pleasure, not desired,  
 Nor lighted on by angels in their flight  
 From heaven to happier planets, and the race  
 That once had dwelt on it withdrawn or dead.  
 Could such a world have hope that some blest day  
 God would remember her, and fashion her  
 Anew?

*Jessie.* What, dearest? Did you speak to me?

*Child.* I think he spoke to us.

*M.* No, little elves,

You were so quiet that I half forgot  
 Your neighbourhood. What are you doing there?

*J.* They sit together on the window-mat  
 Nursing their dolls.

*C.* Yes, Uncle, our new dolls—  
 Our best dolls, that you gave us.

*M.* Did you say  
 The afternoon was bright?

*J.* Yes, bright indeed!  
 The sun is on the plane-tree, and it flames  
 All red and orange.

*C.* I can see my father—  
 Look! look! the leaves are falling on his gown.

*M.* Where?

*C.* In the churchyard, Uncle—he is gone;

He passed behind the tower.

*M.* I heard a bell :

There is a funeral, then, behind the church.

*2nd Child.* Are the trees sorry when their leaves  
drop off?

*1st Child.* You talk such silly words ;—no, not at all.  
There goes another leaf.

*2nd Child.* I did not see.

*1st Child.* Look ! on the grass, between the little hills,  
Just where they planted Amy.

*J.* Amy died—  
Dear little Amy ! when you talk of her,  
Say, she is gone to heaven.

*2nd Child.* They planted her—  
Will she come up next year?

*1st Child.* No, not so soon ;  
But some day God will call her to come up,  
And then she will. Papa knows everything—  
He said she would before he planted her.

*2nd Child.* It was at night she went to heaven.  
Last night  
We saw a star before we went to bed.

*1st Child.* Yes, Uncle, did you know? A large  
bright star,  
And at her side she had some little ones—  
Some young ones.

*M.* Young ones ! no, my little maid,  
Those stars are very old.



*1st Child.* What ! all of them ?

*M.* Yes.

*1st Child.* Older than our father ?

*M.* Older, far.

*2nd Child.* They must be tired of shining there so long.

Perhaps they wish they might come down.

*J.* Perhaps !

Dear children, talk of what you understand.

Come, I must lift the trailing creepers up

That last night's wind has loosened.

*1st Child.* May we help ?

Aunt, may we help to nail them ?

*J.* We shall see.

Go, find and bring the hammer, and some shreds.

[*Steps outside the window, lifts a branch, and sings.*]

Should I change my allegiance for rancour

If fortune changes her side ?

Or should I, like a vessel at anchor,

Turn with the turn of the tide ?

Lift ! O lift, thou lowering sky ;

An thou wilt, thy gloom forego !

An thou wilt not, he and I

Need not part for drifts of snow.

*M.* [*within*] Lift ! No, thou lowering sky, thou wilt not lift—

Thy motto readeth, 'Never.'

*Children.* Here they are !

Here are the nails ! and may we help ?

*J.* You shall,  
If I should want help.

*1st Child.* Will you want it, then?  
Please want it—we like nailing.

*2nd Child.* Yes, we do.

*J.* It seems I ought to want it ; hold the bough,  
And each may nail in turn.

[*Sings.*]

Like a daisy I was, near him growing :  
Must I move because favours flag,  
And be like a brown wall-flower blowing  
Far out of reach in a crag ?  
Lift ! O lift, thou lowering sky ;  
An thou canst, thy blue regain !  
An thou canst not, he and I  
Need not part for drops of rain.

*1st Child.* Now, have we nailed enough ?

*J.* [*trains the creepers*] Yes, you may go ;  
But do not play too near the churchyard path.

*M.* [*within*] Even misfortune does not strike so near  
As my dependence. O, in youth and strength  
To sit a timid coward in the dark,  
And feel before I set a cautious step !  
It is so very dark, so far more dark  
Than any night that day comes after—night  
In which there would be stars, or else at least  
The silvered portion of a sombre cloud  
Through which the moon is plunging.

*J.* [*entering*] Merton !

*M.* Yes.

*J.* Dear Merton, did you know that I could hear?

*M.* No: e'en my solitude is not mine now,  
And if I be alone is oftentimes doubt.

Alas! far more than eyesight have I lost;

For manly courage drifteth after it—

E'en as a splintered spar would drift away

From some dismayed wreck. Hear, I complain—

Like a weak ailing woman I complain.

*J.* For the first time.

*M.* I cannot bear the dark.

*J.* My brother! you do bear it—bear it well—

Have borne it twelve long months, and not complained.

Comfort your heart with music: all the air

Is warm with sunbeams where the organ stands.

You like to feel them on you. Come and play.

*M.* My fate, my fate is lonely!

*J.* So it is—

I know it is.

*M.* And pity breaks my heart.

*J.* Does it, dear Merton?

*M.* Yes, I say it does.

What! do you think I am so dull of ear

That I can mark no changes in the tones

That reach me? Once I liked not girlish pride

And that coy quiet, chary of reply,

That held me distant: now the sweetest lips

Open to entertain me—fairest hands

Are proffered me to guide.

*J.* That is not well?

*M.* No : give me coldness, pride, or still disdain,  
Gentle withdrawal. Give me anything  
But this—a fearless, sweet, confiding ease,  
Whereof I may expect, I may exact,  
Considerate care and have it—gentle speech,  
And have it. Give me anything but this !  
For they who give it, give it in the faith  
That I will not misdeem them, and forget  
My doom so far as to perceive thereby  
Hope of a wife. They make this thought too plain.  
They wound me—O they cut me to the heart !  
When have I said to any one of them,  
' I am a blind and desolate man ;—come here,  
I pray you—be as eyes to me ? ' When said,  
Even to her whose pitying voice is sweet  
To my dark ruined heart, as must be hands  
That clasp a lifelong captive's through the grate,  
And who will ever lend her delicate aid  
To guide me, dark incumbrance that I am !—  
When have I said to her, ' Comforting voice,  
Belonging to a face unknown, I pray  
Be my wife's voice ! '

*J.* Never, my brother—no,  
You never have !

*M.* What could she think of me  
If I forgot myself so far ? or what

Could she reply?

*J.* You ask not as men ask  
Who care for an opinion ; else perhaps,  
Although I am not sure—although, perhaps,  
I have no right to give one—I should say  
She would reply, ‘ I will ! ’

---

*Afterthought.*

Man dwells apart, though not alone,  
He walks among his peers unread ;  
The best of thoughts which he hath known,  
For lack of listeners are not said.

Yet dreaming on earth’s clustered isles,  
He saith, ‘ They dwell not lone like men,’  
Forgetful that their sunflecked smiles  
Flash far beyond each other’s ken.

He looks on God’s eternal suns  
That sprinkle the celestial blue,  
And saith, ‘ Ah ! happy shining ones,  
I would that men were grouped like you ! ’

Yet this is sure : the loveliest star  
That clustered with its peers we see,  
Only because from us so far  
Doth near its fellows seem to be.



## SONGS OF SEVEN.

SEVEN TIMES ONE. EXULTATION.

**H**ERE'S no dew left on the daisies and clover,  
There's no rain left in heaven :  
I've said my 'seven times' over and over,  
Seven times one are seven.

I am old, so old, I can write a letter ;  
My birthday lessons are done ;  
The lambs play always, they know no better ;  
They are only one times one.

O moon ! in the night I have seen you sailing  
And shining so round and low ;  
You were bright ! ah bright ! but your light is failing—  
You are nothing now but a bow.

You moon, have you done something wrong in heaven  
That God has hidden your face ?  
I hope if you have you will soon be forgiven,  
And shine again in your place.

O velvet bee, you 're a dusty fellow,  
You 've powdered your legs with gold !  
O brave marsh marybuds, rich and yellow,  
Give me your money to hold !

O columbine, open your folded wrapper,  
Where two twin turtle-doves dwell !  
O cuckoopint, toll me the purple clapper  
That hangs in your clear green bell !

And show me your nest with the young ones in it ;  
I will not steal them away ;  
I am old ! you may trust me, linnet, linnet—  
I am seven times one to-day.

---

SEVEN TIMES TWO. ROMANCE.

You bells in the steeple, ring, ring out your changes,  
How many soever they be,  
And let the brown meadow-lark's note as he ranges  
Come over, come over to me.

Yet bird's clearest carol by fall or by swelling  
No magical sense conveys,  
And bells have forgotten their old art of telling  
The fortune of future days.



‘Turn again, turn again,’ once they rang cheerily,  
While a boy listened alone ;  
Made his heart yearn again, musing so wearily  
All by himself on a stone.

Poor bells ! I forgive you ; your good days are over,  
And mine, they are yet to be ;  
No listening, no longing shall aught, aught discover :  
You leave the story to me.

The foxglove shoots out of the green matted heather,  
Preparing her hoods of snow ;  
She was idle, and slept till the sunshiny weather :  
O, children take long to grow.

I wish, and I wish that the spring would go faster,  
Nor long summer bide so late ;  
And I could grow on like the foxglove and aster,  
For some things are ill to wait.

I wait for the day when dear hearts shall discover,  
While dear hands are laid on my head ;  
‘The child is a woman, the book may close over,  
For all the lessons are said.’

I wait for my story—the birds cannot sing it,  
Not one, as he sits on the tree ;  
The bells cannot ring it, but long years, O bring it !  
Such as I wish it to be.



## SEVEN TIMES THREE. LOVE.

I leaned out of window, I smelt the white clover,  
Dark, dark was the garden, I saw not the gate ;  
' Now, if there be footsteps, he comes, my one lover—  
Hush, nightingale, hush ! O, sweet nightingale, wait  
Till I listen and hear  
If a step draweth near,  
For my love he is late !

' The skies in the darkness stoop nearer and nearer,  
A cluster of stars hangs like fruit in the tree,  
The fall of the water comes sweeter, comes clearer :  
To what art thou listening, and what dost thou see ?  
Let the star-clusters grow,  
Let the sweet waters flow,  
And cross quickly to me.

You night moths that hover where honey brims over  
From sycamore blossoms, or settle or sleep ;  
You glowworms, shine out, and the pathway discover  
To him that comes darkling along the rough steep.  
Ah, my sailor, make haste,  
For the time runs to waste,  
And my love lieth deep—

'Too deep for swift telling ; and yet, my one lover,  
 I 've conned thee an answer, it waits thee to-night.'  
 By the sycamore passed he, and through the white clover,  
 Then all the sweet speech I had fashioned took flight ;  
     But I 'll love him more, more  
     Than e'er wife loved before,  
     Be the days dark or bright.

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## SEVEN TIMES FOUR. MATERNITY.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,  
 Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall !  
 When the wind wakes how they rock in the grasses,  
 And dance with the cuckoo-buds slender and small !  
 Here 's two bonny boys, and here 's mother's own lasses,  
     Eager to gather them all.

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups !  
 Mother shall thread them a daisy chain ;  
 Sing them a song of the pretty hedge sparrow,  
 That loved her brown little ones, loved them full fain ;  
 Sing, ' Heart, thou art wide though the house be but  
     narrow '—  
     Sing once, and sing it again.

---

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,  
Sweet wagging cowslips, they bend and they bow ;  
A ship sails afar over warm ocean waters,  
And haply one musing doth stand at her prow.  
O bonny brown sons, and O sweet little daughters,  
Maybe he thinks on you now !

Heigh ho ! daisies and buttercups,  
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall—  
A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure,  
And fresh hearts unconscious of sorrow and thrall !  
Send down on their pleasure smiles passing its measure,  
God that is over us all !

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SEVEN TIMES FIVE. WIDOWHOOD.

I sleep and rest, my heart makes moan  
Before I am well awake ;  
' Let me bleed ! O let me alone,  
Since I must not break !

For children wake, though fathers sleep  
With a stone at foot and at head :  
O sleepless God, for ever keep,  
Keep both living and dead !

I lift mine eyes, and what to see  
But a world happy and fair !  
I have not wished it to mourn with me—  
Comfort is not there.

O what anear but golden brooms,  
And a waste of reedy rills !  
O what afar but the fine glooms  
On the rare blue hills !

I shall not die, but live forlore—  
How bitter it is to part !  
O to meet thee, my love, once more !  
O my heart, my heart !

No more to hear, no more to see !  
O that an echo might wake  
And waft one note of thy psalm to me  
Ere my heart-strings break !

I should know it how faint soe'er,  
And with angel voices blent ;  
O once to feel thy spirit anear ;  
I could be content !

Or once between the gates of gold,  
While an entering angel trod,  
But once—thee sitting to behold  
On the hills of God !

## SEVEN TIMES SIX. GIVING IN MARRIAGE.

To bear, to nurse, to rear,  
    To watch, and then to lose :  
To see my bright ones disappear,  
    Drawn up like morning dews—  
To bear, to nurse, to rear,  
    To watch, and then to lose :  
This have I done when God drew near  
    Among his own to choose.

To hear, to heed, to wed,  
    And with thy lord depart  
In tears that he, as soon as shed,  
    Will let no longer smart.—  
To hear, to heed, to wed,  
    This while thou didst I smiled,  
For now it was not God who said  
    ‘ Mother, give ME thy child.’

O fond, O fool, and blind,  
    To God I gave with tears ;  
But when a man like grace would find,  
    My soul put by her fears—  
O fond, O fool, and blind,  
    God guards in happier spheres ;  
That man will guard where he did bind  
    Is hope for unknown years.

To hear, to heed, to wed,  
 Fair lot that maidens choose,  
 Thy mother's tenderest words are said,  
 Thy face no more she views ;  
 Thy mother's lot, my dear,  
 She doth in nought accuse ;  
 Her lot to bear, to nurse, to rear,  
 To love—and then to lose.

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## SEVEN TIMES SEVEN. LONGING FOR HOME.

## I

A song of a boat :—

There was once a boat on a billow :  
 Lightly she rocked to her port remote,  
 And the foam was white in her wake like snow,  
 And her frail mast bowed when the breeze would blow  
 And bent like a wand of willow.

## II

I shaded mine eyes one day when a boat  
 Went curtseying over the billow,  
 I marked her course till a dancing mote  
 She faded out on the moonlit foam,  
 And I stayed behind in the dear loved home ;  
 And my thoughts all day were about the boat  
 And my dreams upon the pillow.

## III

I pray you hear my song of a boat,  
For it is but short :—  
My boat, you shall find none fairer afloat,  
In river or port.  
Long I looked out for the lad she bore,  
On the open desolate sea,  
And I think he sailed to the heavenly shore,  
For he came not back to me—  
Ah me !

## IV

A song of a nest :—  
There was once a nest in a hollow :  
Down in the mosses and knot-grass pressed,  
Soft and warm, and full to the brim—  
Vetches leaned over it purple and dim,  
With buttercup buds to follow.

## V

I pray you hear my song of a nest,  
For it is not long :—  
You shall never light, in a summer quest  
The bushes among—  
Shall never light on a prouder sitter,  
A fairer nestful, nor ever know  
A softer sound than their tender twitter,  
That wind-like did come and go.

## VI

I had a nestful once of my own,  
Ah happy, happy I !  
Right dearly I loved them : but when they were grown  
They spread out their wings to fly—  
O, one after one they flew away  
Far up to the heavenly blue,  
To the better country, the upper day,  
And—I wish I was going too.

## VII

I pray you, what is the nest to me,  
My empty nest ?  
And what is the shore where I stood to see  
My boat sail down to the west ?  
Can I call that home where I anchor yet,  
Though my good man has sailed ?  
Can I call that home where my nest was set,  
Now all its hope hath failed ?  
Nay, but the port where my sailor went,  
And the land where my nestlings be :  
There is the home where my thoughts are sent,  
The only home for me—  
Ah me !





*A COTTAGE IN A CHINE.*

**W**E reached the place by night,  
And heard the waves breaking :  
They came to meet us with candles alight  
To show the path we were taking.

A myrtle, trained on the gate, was white  
With tufted flowers down shaking.

With head beneath her wing,  
A little wren was sleeping—  
So near, I had found it an easy thing  
To steal her for my keeping  
From the myrtle bough that with easy swing  
Across the path was sweeping.

Down rocky steps rough-hewed,  
Where cup-mosses flowered,  
And under the trees, all twisted and rude,  
Wherewith the dell was dowered,  
They led us, where deep in its solitude  
Lay the cottage, leaf-embowered.

The thatch was all bespread  
With climbing passion flowers ;  
They were wet, and glistened with raindrops, shed  
That day in genial showers.  
' Was never a sweeter nest,' we said,  
' Than this little nest of ours.'

We laid us down to sleep :  
But as for me—waking,  
I marked the plunge of the muffled deep  
On its sandy reaches breaking ;  
For heart-joyance doth sometimes keep  
From slumber, like heart-aching.

And I was glad that night,  
With no reason ready,  
To give my own heart for its deep delight,  
That flowed like some tidal eddy  
Or shone like a star that was rising bright  
With comforting radiance steady.

But on a sudden—hark !  
Music struck asunder  
Those meshes of bliss, and I wept in the dark,  
So sweet was the unseen wonder ;  
So swiftly it touched, as if struck at a mark  
The trouble that joy kept under.

I rose—the moon outshone :  
I saw the sea heaving,  
And a little vessel sailing alone,  
The small crisp wavelet cleaving ;  
'T was she as she sailed to her port unknown—  
Was that track of sweetness leaving.

We know they music made  
In heaven, ere man's creation ;  
But when God threw it down to us that strayed,  
It dropt with lamentation,  
And ever since doth its sweetness shade  
With sighs for its first station.

Its joy suggests regret—  
Its most for more is yearning ;  
And it brings to the soul that its voice hath met,  
No rest that cadence learning,  
But a conscious part in the sighs that fret  
Its nature for returning.

O Eve, sweet Eve! methought  
When sometimes comfort winning,  
As she watched the first children's tender sport,  
Sole joy born since her sinning,  
If a bird anear them sang, it brought  
The pang as at beginning.

While swam the unshed tear,  
Her prattlers little heeding,  
Would murmur, ' This bird, with its carol clear,  
When the red clay was kneaden,  
And God made Adam our father dear,  
Sang to him thus in Eden.'

The moon went in—the sky  
And earth and sea hiding,  
I laid me down, with the yearning sigh  
Of that strain in my heart abiding ;  
I slept, and the barque that had sailed so nigh  
In my dream was ever gliding.

I slept, but waked amazed,  
With sudden noise frighted,  
And voices without, and a flash that dazed  
Mine eyes from candles lighted.  
' Ah ! surely,' methought, ' by these shouts upraised,  
Some travellers are benighted.'

A voice was at my side—  
' Waken, madam, waken !  
The long prayed-for ship at her anchor doth ride.  
Let the child from its rest be taken,  
For the captain doth weary for babe and for bride—  
Waken, madam, waken !

'The home you left but late,  
He speeds to it light-hearted ;  
By the wires he sent this news, and straight  
To you with it they started.'  
O joy for a yearning heart too great,  
O union for the parted !

We rose up in the night,  
The morning star was shining ;  
We carried the child in its slumber light  
Out by the myrtles twining :  
Orion over the sea hung bright,  
And glorious in declining.

Mother, to meet her son,  
Smiled first, then wept the rather ;  
And wife, to bind up those links undone,  
And cherished words to gather,  
And to show the face of her little one,  
That had never seen its father.

That cottage in a chine,  
We were not to behold it ;  
But there may the purest of sunbeams shine,  
May freshest flowers enfold it,  
For sake of the news which our hearts must twine  
With the bower where we were told it !

Now oft, left lone again,  
Sits mother and sits daughter ;  
They bless the good ship that sailed over the main,  
And the favouring winds that brought her ;  
While still some new beauty they fable and feign  
For the cottage by the water.





*PERSEPHONE.*

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Written for THE PORTFOLIO SOCIETY, January 1862.

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*Subject given—'Light and Shade.'*



HE stepped upon Sicilian grass,  
Demeter's daughter fresh and fair,  
A child of light, a radiant lass,  
And gamesome as the morning air.  
The daffodils were fair to see,  
They nodded lightly on the lea,  
Persephone—Persephone !

Lo ! one she marked of rarer growth  
Than orchis or anemone ;  
For it the maiden left them both,  
And parted from her company.  
Drawn nigh she deemed it fairer still,  
And stooped to gather by the rill  
The daffodil, the daffodil.

What ailed the meadow that it shook ?  
What ailed the air of Sicily ?  
She wondered by the brattling brook,  
And trembled with the trembling lea.  
The coal-black horses rise—they rise :  
' O mother, mother ! ' low she cries—  
Persephone—Persephone !

' O light, light, light ! ' she cries, ' farewell :  
The coal-black horses wait for me.  
O shade of shades, where I must dwell,  
Demeter, mother, far from thee !  
Ah, fated doom that I fulfill !  
Ah, fateful flower beside the rill !  
The daffodil, the daffodil ! '

What ails her that she comes not home ?  
Demeter seeks her far and wide,  
And gloomy-browed doth ceaseless roam  
From many a morn till eventide.  
' My life, immortal though it be,  
Is nought,' she cries, ' for want of thee,  
Persephone—Persephone !

' Meadows of Enna, let the rain  
No longer drop to feed your rills,  
Nor dew refresh the fields again,  
With all their nodding daffodils.'



Fade, fade and droop, O lilled lea,  
Where thou, dear heart, wert reft from me—  
Persephone—Persephone !’

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She reigns upon her dusky throne,  
’Mid shades of heroes dread to see ;  
Among the dead she breathes alone,  
Persephone—Persephone !  
Or seated on the Elysian hill  
She dreams of earthly daylight still,  
And murmurs of the daffodil.

A voice in Hades soundeth clear,  
The shadows mourn and flit below ;  
It cries—‘Thou Lord of Hades, hear,  
And let Demeter’s daughter go.  
The tender corn upon the lea  
Droops in her goddess gloom when she  
Cries for her lost Persephone.

‘ From land to land she raging flies,  
The green fruit falleth in her wake,  
And harvest fields beneath her eyes  
To earth the grain unripened shake.  
Arise, and set the maiden free ;  
Why should the world such sorrow dree  
By reason of Persephone ?’

He takes the cleft pomegranate seeds :  
 ' Love, eat with me this parting day ;'  
 Then bids them fetch the coal-black steeds—  
 ' Demeter's daughter, wouldst away ?'  
 The gates of Hades set her free ;  
 ' She will return full soon,' saith he—  
 ' My wife, my wife Persephone.'

Low laughs the dark king on his throne—  
 ' I gave her of pomegranate seeds.'  
 Demeter's daughter stands alone  
 Upon the fair Eleusian meads.  
 Her mother meets her. ' Hail !' saith she ;  
 ' And doth our daylight dazzle thee,  
 My love, my child Persephone ?'

' What moved thee, daughter, to forsake  
 Thy fellow-maids that fatal morn,  
 And give thy dark lord power to take  
 Thee living to his realm forlorn ?'  
 Her lips reply without her will,  
 As one addressed who slumbereth still—  
 ' The daffodil, the daffodil !'

Her eyelids droop with light oppressed,  
 And sunny wafts that round her stir,  
 Her cheek upon her mother's breast—  
 Demeter's kisses comfort her.

Calm Queen of Hades, art thou she  
Who stepped so lightly on the lea—  
Persephone, Persephone?

When, in her destined course, the moon  
Meets the deep shadow of this world,  
And labouring on doth seem to swoon  
Through awful wastes of dimness whirled—  
Emerged at length, no trace hath she  
Of that dark hour of destiny,  
Still silvery sweet—Persephone.

The greater world may near the less,  
And draw it through her weltering shade,  
But not one bidding trace impress  
Of all the darkness that she made ;  
The greater soul that draweth thee  
Hath left his shadow plain to see  
On thy fair face, Persephone !

Demeter sighs, but sure 't is well  
The wife should love her destiny :  
They part, and yet, as legends tell,  
She mourns her lost Persephone ;  
While chant the maids of Enna still—  
' O fateful flower beside the rill—  
The daffodil, the daffodil !'



*A SEA SONG.*



LD ALBION sat on a crag of late,  
And sang out—‘ Ahoy ! ahoy !  
Long life to the captain, good luck to the mate,  
And this to my sailor boy !  
Come over, come home,  
Through the salt sea foam,  
My sailor, my sailor boy.

‘ Here ’s a crown to be given away, I ween,  
A crown for my sailor’s head,  
And all for the worth of a widowed queen,  
And the love of the noble dead,  
And the fear and fame  
Of the island’s name  
Where my boy was born and bred.

‘ Content thee, content thee, let it alone,  
Thou marked for a choice so rare ;  
Though treaties be treaties, never a throne  
Was proffered for cause as fair.

Yet come to me home,  
Through the salt sea foam,  
For the Greek must ask elsewhere.

'T is a pity, my sailor, but who can tell?  
Many lands they look to me ;  
One of these might be wanting a Prince as well,  
But that 's as hereafter may be.'  
She raised her white head  
And laughed ; and she said,  
' That 's as hereafter may be.'





*BROTHERS, AND A SERMON.*

**T** was a village built in a green rent,  
Between two cliffs that skirt the dangerous  
bay.

A reef of level rock runs out to sea,  
And you may lie on it and look sheer down,  
Just where the 'Grace of Sunderland' was lost,  
And see the elastic banners of the dulse  
Rock softly, and the orange star-fish creep  
Across the laver, and the mackerel shoot  
Over and under it, like silver boats  
Turning at will and plying under water.

There on that reef we lay upon our breasts,  
My brother and I, and half the village lads,  
For an old fisherman had called to us  
With 'Sirs, the syle be come.' 'And what are they?'  
My brother said. 'Good lack!' the old man cried,  
And shook his head; 'to think you gentlefolk

Should ask what syle be ! Look you ; I can't say  
 What syle be called in your fine dictionaries,  
 Nor what name God Almighty calls them by  
 When their food 's ready and He sends them south ;  
 But our folk call them syle, and nought but syle,  
 And when they 're grown, why then we call them herring.  
 I tell you, Sir, the water is as full  
 Of them as pastures be of blades of grass ;  
 You 'll draw a score out in a landing net,  
 And none of them be longer than a pin.

'Syle ! ay, indeed, we should be badly off,  
 I reckon, and so would God Almighty's gulls,'  
 He grumbled on in his quaint piety,  
 'And all his other birds, if He should say  
 I will not drive my syle into the south ;  
 The fisher folk may do without my syle,  
 And do without the shoals of fish it draws  
 To follow and feed on it.'

This said, we made  
 Our peace with him by means of two small coins,  
 And down we ran and lay upon the reef,  
 And saw the swimming infants, emerald green,  
 In separate shoals, the scarcely turning ebb  
 Bringing them in ; while sleek, and not intent  
 On chase, but taking that which came to hand,  
 The full-fed mackerel and the gurnet swam  
 Between ; and settling on the polished sea,



A thousand snow-white gulls sat lovingly  
In social rings, and twittered while they fed.  
The village dogs and ours, elate and brave,  
Lay looking over, barking at the fish ;  
Fast, fast the silver creatures took the bait,  
And when they heaved and floundered on the rock,  
In beauteous misery, a sudden pat  
Some shaggy pup would deal, then back away,  
At distance eye them with sagacious doubt,  
And shrink half frightened from the slippery things.

And so we lay from ebb-tide, till the flow  
Rose high enough to drive us from the reef ;  
The fisher lads went home across the sand ;  
We climbed the cliff, and sat an hour or more,  
Talking and looking down. It was not talk  
Of much significance, except for this—  
That we had more in common than of old,  
For both were tired, I with overwork,  
He with inaction ; I was glad at heart  
To rest, and he was glad to have an ear  
That he could grumble to, and half in jest  
Rail at entails, deplore the fate of heirs,  
And the misfortune of a good estate—  
Misfortune that was sure to pull him down,  
Make him a dreamy, selfish, useless man :  
Indeed he felt himself deteriorate  
Already. Thereupon he sent down showers



Of clattering stones, to emphasise his words,  
And leap the cliffs and tumble noisily  
Into the seething wave. And as for me  
I railed at him and at ingratitude,  
While rifling of the basket he had slung  
Across his shoulders ; then with right good will  
We fell to work, and feasted like the gods,  
Like labourers, or like eager workhouse folk  
At Yuletide dinner ; or, to say the whole  
At once, like tired, hungry, healthy youth,  
Until the meal being o'er, the tilted flask  
Drained of its latest drop, the meat and bread  
And ruddy cherries eaten, and the dogs  
Mumbling the bones, this elder brother of mine—  
This man, that never felt an ache or pain  
In his broad, well-knit frame, and never knew  
The trouble of an unforgiven grudge,  
The sting of a regretted meanness, nor  
The desperate struggle of the unendowed  
For place and for possession—he began  
To sing a rhyme that he himself had wrought ;  
Sending it out with cogitative pause,  
As if the scene where he had shaped it first  
Had rolled it back on him, and meeting it  
Thus unaware, he was of doubtful mind  
Whether his dignity it well beseemed  
To sing of pretty maiden :

Goldilocks sat on the grass,  
 Tying up of posies rare ;  
 Hardly could a sunbeam pass  
 Through the cloud that was her hair.  
 Purple orchis lasteth long,  
 Primrose flowers are pale and clear ;  
 O the maiden sang a song  
 It would do you good to hear !

Sad before her leaned the boy,  
 ‘Goldilocks that I love well,  
 Happy creature fair and coy,  
 Think o’ me, Sweet Amabel.’  
 Goldilocks she shook apart,  
 Looked with doubtful, doubtful eyes,  
 Like a blossom in her heart  
 Opened out her first surprise.

As a gloriolate sign o’ grace,  
 Goldilocks, ah fall and flow,  
 On the blooming, childlike face,  
 Dimple, dimple, come and go.  
 Give her time ; on grass and sky  
 Let her gaze if she be fain :  
 As they looked ere he drew nigh,  
 They will never look again.

Ah ! the playtime she has know’d,  
 While her goldilocks grew long,  
 Is it like a nestling flown,  
 Childhood over like a song ?  
 Yes, the boy may clear his brow,  
 Though she thinks to say him nay,  
 When she sighs, ‘I cannot now—  
 Come again some other day.’

‘Hold ! there,’ he cried, half angry with himself ;  
 ‘That ending goes amiss :’ then turned again

To the old argument that we had held—  
‘ Now look you ! ’ said my brother, ‘ you may talk  
Till, weary of the talk, I answer “ Ay,  
There ’s reason in your words ; ” and you may talk  
Till I go on to say, “ This should be so ; ”  
And you may talk till I shall further own  
“ It is so ; yes, I am a lucky dog ! ”  
Yet not the less shall I next morning wake,  
And with a natural and fervent sigh,  
Such as you never heaved, I shall exclaim  
“ What an unlucky dog I am ! ” ’ And here  
He broke into a laugh. ‘ But as for you—  
You ! on all hands you have the best of me ;  
Men have not robbed you of your birthright—work,  
Nor ravaged in old days a peaceful field,  
Nor wedded heiresses against their will,  
Nor sinned, nor slaved, nor stooped, nor overreached  
That you might drone a useless life away  
’Mid half a score of bleak and barren farms  
And half a dozen bogs.’

‘ O rare ! ’ I cried ;  
‘ His wrongs go nigh to make him eloquent :  
Now we behold how far bad actions reach !  
Because five hundred years ago a Knight  
Drove geese and beeves out from a Franklin’s yard ;  
Because three hundred years ago a squire—  
Against her will, and for her fair estate—

Married a very ugly, red-haired maid,  
 The blest inheritor of all their pelf,  
 While in the full enjoyment of the same,  
 Sighs on his own confession every day.  
 He cracks no egg without a moral sigh,  
 Nor eats of beef but thinking on that wrong ;  
 Then, yet the more to be revenged on them,  
 And shame their ancient pride, if they should know,  
 Works hard as any horse for his degree,  
 And takes to writing verses.'

'Ay,' he said,  
 Half laughing at himself. 'Yet you and I,  
 But for those tresses which enrich us yet  
 With somewhat of the hue that partial fame  
 Calls auburn when it shines on heads of heirs,  
 But when it flames round brows of younger sons.  
 Just red—mere red ; why, but for this, I say,  
 And but for selfish getting of the land,  
 And beggarly entailing it, we two,  
 To-day well fed, well grown, well dressed, well read,  
 We might have been two horny-handed boors—  
 Lean, clumsy, ignorant. and ragged boors—  
 Planning for moonlight nights a poaching scheme,  
 Or soiling our dull souls and consciences  
 With plans for pilfering a cottage roost.

'What, chorus ! are you dumb ? you should have cried,  
 "So good comes out of evil ;"' and with that,

As if all pauses it was natural  
To seize for songs, his voice broke out again :

Coo, dove, to thy married mate—  
She has two warm eggs in her nest :  
Tell her the hours are few to wait  
Ere life shall dawn on their rest ;  
And thy young shall peck at the shells, elate  
With a dream of her brooding breast.

Coo, dove, for she counts the hours,  
Her fair wings ache for flight :  
By day the apple has grown in the flowers,  
And the moon has grown by night,  
And the white drift settled from hawthorn bowers,  
Yet they will not seek the light.

Coo, dove ; but what of the sky ?  
And what if the storm-wind swell,  
And the reeling branch come down from on high  
To the grass where daisies dwell,  
And the brood belovèd should with them lie  
Or ever they break the shell ?

Coo, dove ; and yet black clouds lower,  
Like fate, on the far-off sea :  
Thunder and wind they bear to thy bower,  
As on wings of destiny.  
Ah, what if they break in an evil hour,  
As they broke over mine and me ?

What next?—we started like to girls, for lo !  
The creaking voice, more harsh than rusty crane,  
Of one who stooped behind us, cried aloud,  
' Good lack ! how sweet the gentleman doth sing—  
So loud and sweet, 't is like to split his throat.

Why, Mike 's a child to him, a two-years child—  
A Chrisom child.'

'Who 's Mike?' my brother growled  
A little roughly. Quoth the fisherman—  
'Mike, Sir? he 's just a fisher lad, no more ;  
But he can sing, when he takes on to sing,  
So loud there 's not a sparrow in the spire  
But needs must hear. Sir, if I might make bold,  
I 'd ask what song that was you sung. My mate,  
As we were shoving off the mackerel boats,  
Said he, "I 'll wager that 's the sort o' song  
They kept their hearts up with in the Crimea."'

'There, fisherman,' quoth I, 'he showed his wit,  
Your mate ; he marked the sound of savage war—  
Gunpowder, groans, hot-shot, and bursting shells,  
And "murderous messages" delivered by  
Spent balls that break the heads of dreaming men.'

'Ay, ay, Sir !' quoth the fisherman. 'Have done !'  
My brother. And I—'The gift belongs to few  
Of sending farther than the words can reach  
Their spirit and expression ;' still—'Have done !'  
He cried ; and then, 'I rolled the rubbish out  
More loudly than the meaning warranted,  
To air my lungs—I thought not on the words.'

Then said the fisherman, who missed the point,

• So Mike rolls out the psalm ; you 'll hear him, Sir,  
Please God you live till Sunday.'

‘ Even so :

And you, too, fisherman ; for here, they say,  
You all are church-goers.'

‘ Surely, Sir,' quoth he,  
Took off his hat, and stroked his old white head  
And wrinkled face ; then sitting by us said,  
As one that utters with a quiet mind  
Unchallenged truth—' 'T is lucky for the boats.'

The boats ! 't is lucky for the boats ! Our eyes  
Were drawn to him as either fain would say,  
What ! do they send the psalm up in the spire  
And pray because 't is lucky for the boats ?

But he, the brown old man, the wrinkled man,  
That all his life had been a church-goer,  
Familiar with celestial cadences,  
Informed of all he could receive, and sure  
Of all he understood—he sat content,  
And we kept silence. In his reverend face  
There was a simpleness we could not sound ;  
Much truth had passed him overhead ; some error  
He had trod under foot ;—God comfort him !  
He could not learn of us, for we were young  
And he was old, and so we gave it up ;  
And the sun went into the west, and down



Upon the water stooped an orange cloud,  
And the pale milky reaches flushed, as glad  
To wear its colours ; and the sultry air  
Went out to sea, and puffed the sails of ships  
With thymy wafts, the breath of trodden grass :  
It took moreover music, for across  
The heather belt and over pasture land  
Came the sweet monotone of one slow bell,  
And parted time into divisions rare,  
Whereof each morsel brought its own delight.

‘ They ring for service,’ quoth the fisherman ;  
‘ Our parson preaches in the church to-night.’

‘ And do the people go ? ’ my brother asked.

‘ Ay, Sir ; they count it mean to stay away,  
He takes it so to heart. He ’s a rare man,  
Our parson ; half a head above us all.’

‘ That ’s a great gift, and notable,’ said I.

‘ Ay, Sir ; and when he was a younger man  
He went out in the lifeboat very oft,  
Before the “ Grace of Sunderland ” was wrecked.  
He ’s never been his own man since that hour ;  
For there were thirty men aboard of her,  
Anigh as close as you are now to me.



And ne'er a one was saved.

They 're lying now,  
With two small children, in a row : the church  
And yard are full of seamen's graves, and few  
Have any names.

She bumped upon the reef ;  
Our parson, my young son, and several more  
Were lashed together with a two-inch rope,  
And crept along to her ; their mates ashore  
Ready to haul them in. The gale was high,  
The sea was all a boiling seething froth,  
And God Almighty's guns were going off,  
And the land trembled.

When she took the ground,  
She went to pieces like a lock of hay  
Tossed from a pitchfork. Ere it came to that,  
The captain reeled on deck with two small things,  
One in each arm—his little lad and lass.  
Their hair was long, and blew before his face,  
Or else we thought he had been saved ; he fell,  
But held them fast. The crew, poor luckless souls,  
The breakers licked them off ; and some were crushed,  
Some swallowed in the yeast, some flung up dead,  
The dear breath beaten out of them : not one  
Jumped from the wreck upon the reef to catch  
The hands that strained to reach, but tumbled back  
With eyes wide open. But the captain lay

And clung—the only man alive. They prayed—  
“For God’s sake, captain, throw the children here!”  
“Throw them!” our parson cried; and then she struck:  
And he threw one, a pretty two-years child;  
But the gale dashed him on the slippery verge,  
And down he went. They say they heard him cry.

Then he rose up and took the other one,  
And all our men reached out their hungry arms,  
And cried out, “Throw her, throw her!” and he did  
He threw her right against the parson’s breast,  
And all at once a sea broke over them,  
And they that saw it from the shore have said  
It struck the wreck and piecemeal scattered it,  
Just as a woman might the lump of salt  
That ’twixt her hands into the kneading-pan  
She breaks and crumbles on her rising bread.

‘We hauled our men in: two of them were dead—  
The sea had beaten them, their heads hung down;  
Our parson’s arms were empty, for the wave  
Had torn away the pretty, pretty lamb;  
We often see him stand beside her grave:  
But ’t was no fault of his, no fault of his.

I ask your pardon, Sirs; I prate and prate,  
And never have I said what brought me here.

Sirs, if you want a boat to-morrow morn,  
I 'm bold to say there 's ne'er a boat like mine.'

'Ay, that was what we wanted,' we replied ;  
'A boat, his boat ;' and off he went, well pleased.

We, too, rose up (the crimson in the sky  
Flushing our faces), and went sauntering on,  
And thought to reach our lodging, by the cliff.  
And up and down among the heather beds,  
And up and down between the sheaves, we sped,  
Doubling and winding ; for a long ravine  
Ran up into the land and cut us off,  
Pushing out slippery ledges for the birds,  
And rent with many a crevice, where the wind  
Had laid up drifts of empty eggshells, swept  
From the bare berths of gulls and guillemots.

So as it chanced we lighted on a path  
That led into a nutwood ; and our talk  
Was louder than beseemed, if we had known,  
With argument and laughter ; for the path,  
As we sped onward, took a sudden turn  
Abrupt, and we came out on churchyard grass,  
And close upon a porch, and face to face  
With those within, and with the thirty graves.  
We heard the voice of one who preached within,  
And stopped. 'Come on,' my brother whispered me,

‘It were more decent that we enter now ;  
 Come on ! we ’ll hear this rare old demigod :  
 I like strong men and large ; I like grey heads,  
 And grand gruff voices, hoarse though this may be  
 With shouting in the storm.’

It was not hoarse,  
 The voice that preached to those few fishermen  
 And women, nursing mothers with the babes  
 Hushed on their breasts ; and yet it held them not :  
 Their drowsy eyes were drawn to look at us,  
 Till, having leaned our rods against the wall,  
 And left the dogs at watch, we entered, sat,  
 And were apprised that, though he saw us not,  
 The parson knew that he had lost the eyes  
 And ears of those before him, for he made  
 A pause—a long dead pause—and dropped his arms,  
 And stood awaiting, till I felt the red  
 Mount to my brow.

And a soft fluttering stir  
 Passed over all, and every mother hushed  
 The babe beneath her shawl, and he turned round  
 And met our eyes, unused to diffidence,  
 But diffident of his ; then with a sigh  
 Fronted the folk, lifted his grand grey head,  
 And said, as one that pondered now the words  
 He had been preaching on with new surprise,  
 And found fresh marvel in their sound, ‘Behold !  
 Behold !’ saith He, ‘I stand at the door and knock.’

Then said the parson : ‘ What ! and shall He wait,  
 And must He wait, not only till we say,  
 “ Good Lord, the house is clean, the hearth is swept,  
 The children sleep, the mackerel-boats are in,  
 And all the nets are mended ; therefore I  
 Will slowly to the door and open it : ”  
 But must He also wait where still, behold !  
 He stands and knocks, while we do say, “ Good Lord,  
 The gentlefolk are come to worship here,  
 And I will up and open to Thee soon ;  
 But first I pray a little longer wait,  
 For I am taken up with them ; my eyes  
 Must needs regard the fashion of their clothes,  
 And count the gains I think to make by them ;  
 Forsooth, they are of much account, good Lord !  
 ‘ Therefore have patience with me—wait, dear Lord !  
 Or come again ? ”

What ! must He wait for THIS—  
 For this? Ay, He doth wait for this, and still,  
 Waiting for this, He, patient, railleth not ;  
 Waiting for this, e’en this He saith, “ Behold !  
 I stand at the door and knock.”

O patient hand !  
 Knocking and waiting—knocking in the night  
 When work is done ! I charge you, by the sea  
 Whereby you fill your children’s mouths, and by  
 The might of Him that made it—fishermen !  
 I charge you, mothers ! by the mother’s milk

He drew, and by His Father, God over all,  
 Blessèd for ever, that ye answer Him !  
 Open the door with shame, if ye have sinned ;  
 If ye be sorry, open it with sighs.  
 Albeit the place be bare for poverty,  
 And comfortless for lack of plenishing,  
 Be not abashed for that, but open it,  
 And take Him in that comes to sup with thee ;  
 “ Behold ! ” He saith, “ I stand at the door and  
 knock.”

‘ Now, hear me : there be troubles in this world  
 That no man can escape, and there is one  
 That lieth hard and heavy on my soul,  
 Concerning that which is to come :—

I say

As a man that knows what earthly trouble means,  
 I will not bear this ONE—I cannot bear  
 This ONE—I cannot bear the weight of you—  
 You—every one of you, body and soul ;  
 You, with the care you suffer, and the loss  
 That you sustain ; you, with the growing up  
 To peril, maybe with the growing old  
 To want, unless before I stand with you  
 At the great white throne, I may be free of all,  
 And utter to the full what shall discharge  
 Mine obligation : nay, I will not wait  
 A day, for every time the black clouds rise,

And the gale freshens, still I search my soul  
 To find if there be aught that can persuade  
 To good, or aught forsooth that can beguile  
 From evil, that I (miserable man !  
 If that be so) have left unsaid, undone.

‘ So that when any risen from sunken wrecks,  
 Or rolled in by the billows to the edge  
 Of the everlasting strand, what time the sea  
 Gives up her dead, shall meet me, they may say  
 Never, “ Old man, you told us not of this ;  
 You left us fisher-lads that had to toil  
 Ever in danger of the secret stab  
 Of rocks, far deadlier than the dagger ; winds  
 Of breath more murderous than the cannon’s ; waves  
 Mighty to rock us to our death ; and gulfs  
 Ready beneath to suck and swallow us in :  
 This crime be on your head ; and as for us—  
 What shall we do ? ” but rather—nay, not so,  
 I will not think it ; I will leave the dead,  
 Appealing but to life : I am afraid  
 Of you, but not so much if you have sinned  
 As for the doubt if sin shall be forgiven.  
 The day was, I have been afraid of pride—  
 Hard man’s hard pride ; but now I am afraid  
 Of man’s humility. I counsel you,  
 By the great God’s great humbleness, and by  
 His pity, be not humble over-much.



See ! I will show at whose unopened doors  
He stands and knocks, that you may never say,  
“ I am too mean, too ignorant, too lost ;  
He knocks at other doors, but not at mine.”

‘ See here ! it is the night ! it is the night !  
And snow lies thickly, white untrodden snow,  
And the wan moon upon a casement shines—  
A casement crusted o’er with frosty leaves,  
That make her ray less bright along the floor.  
A woman sits, with hands upon her knees,  
Poor tired soul ! and she has nought to do,  
For there is neither fire nor candle light :  
The driftwood ash lies cold upon her hearth ;  
The rushlight flickered down an hour ago ;  
Her children wail a little in their sleep  
For cold and hunger, and, as if that sound  
Was not enough, another comes to her,  
Over God’s undefilèd snow—a song—  
Nay, never hang your heads—I say, a song.

And doth she curse the alehouse, and the sots  
That drink the night out and their earnings there,  
And drink their manly strength and courage down,  
And drink away the little children’s bread,  
And starve her, starving by the self-same act  
Her tender suckling, that with piteous eyes  
Looks in her face, till scarcely she has heart



To work, and earn the scanty bit and drop  
That feed the others?

Does she curse the song?

I think not, fishermen ; I have not heard  
Such women curse. God's curse is curse enough.  
To-morrow she will say a bitter thing,  
Pulling her sleeve down lest the bruises show—  
A bitter thing, but meant for an excuse—  
“ My master is not worse than many men : ”  
But now, ay, now she sitteth dumb and still ;  
No food, no comfort, cold and poverty  
Bearing her down.

My heart is sore for her ;  
How long, how long ? When troubles come of God,  
When men are frozen out of work, when wives  
Are sick, when working fathers fail and die,  
When boats go down at sea—then nought behoves  
Like patience ; but for troubles wrought of men  
Patience is hard—I tell you it is hard.

‘ O thou poor soul ! it is the night—the night ;  
Against thy door drifts up the silent snow,  
Blocking thy threshold : “ Fall,” thou sayest, “ fall, fall,  
Cold snow, and lie and be trod underfoot.  
Am not I fallen ? Wake up, and pipe, O wind,  
Dull wind, and beat and bluster at my door :  
Merciful wind, sing me a hoarse rough song,  
For there is other music made to-night

That I would fain not hear. Wake, thou still sea,  
 Heavily plunge. Shoot on, white waterfall.  
 O, I could long like thy cold icicles  
 Freeze, freeze, and hang upon the frosty clift  
 And not complain, so I might melt at last  
 In the warm summer sun, as thou wilt do !

“ But woe is me ! I think there is no sun ;  
 My sun is sunken, and the night grows dark :  
 None care for me. The children cry for bread,  
 And I have none, and nought can comfort me ;  
 Even if the heavens were free to such as I,  
 It were not much, for death is long to wait,  
 And heaven is far to go ! ”

And speak'st thou thus,  
 Despairing of the sun that sets to thee,  
 And of the earthly love that wanes to thee,  
 And of the heaven that lieth far from thee ?  
 Peace, peace, fond fool ! One draweth near thy door  
 Whose footsteps leave no print across the snow ;  
 The sun has risen with comfort in his face,  
 The smile of heaven, to warm thy frozen heart  
 And bless with saintly hand. What ! is it long  
 To wait and far to go ? Thou shalt not go ;  
 Behold, across the snow to thee He comes,  
 Thy heaven descends ;—and is it long to wait ?

Thou shalt not wait : “ This night, this night,” He saith,  
 “ I stand at the door and knock.”

It is enough—can such an one be here—  
 Yea, here? O God forgive you, fishermen !  
 One ! is there only one? But do thou know,  
 O woman pale for want, if thou art here,  
 That on thy lot much thought is spent in heaven ;  
 And, coveting the heart a hard man broke,  
 One standeth patient, watching in the night,  
 And waiting in the day-time.

What shall be  
 If thou wilt answer? He will smile on thee :  
 One smile of His shall be enough to heal  
 The wound of man’s neglect ; and He will sigh,  
 Pitying the trouble which that sigh shall cure ;  
 And He will speak—speak in the desolate night,  
 In the dark night : “ For me a thorny crown  
 Men wove, and nails were driven in my hands  
 And feet : there was an earthquake, and I died ;  
 I died, and am alive for evermore.

“ I died for thee ! for thee I am alive,  
 And my humanity doth mourn for thee,  
 For thou art mine ; and all thy little ones,  
 They, too, are mine, are mine. Behold, the house  
 Is dark, but there is brightness where the sons

Of God are singing, and, behold, the heart  
Is troubled : yet the nations walk in white ;  
They have forgotten how to weep ; and thou  
Shalt also come, and I will foster thee  
And satisfy thy soul ; and thou shalt warm  
Thy trembling life beneath the smile of God.  
A little while—it is a little while—  
A little while, and I will comfort thee ;  
I go away, but I will come again.”

‘ But hear me yet. There was a poor old man  
Who sat and listened to the raging sea,  
And heard it thunder, lunging at the cliffs  
As like to tear them down. He lay at night ;  
And “ Lord have mercy on the lads,” said he,  
“ That sailed at noon, though they be none of mine !  
For when the gale gets up, and when the wind  
Flings at the window, when it beats the roof,  
And lulls, and stops, and rouses up again,  
And cuts the crest clean off the plunging wave,  
And scatters it like feathers up the field,  
Why, then I think of my two lads : my lads  
That would have worked and never let me want,  
And never let me take the parish pay.  
No, none of mine ; my lads were drowned at sea—  
My two—before the most of these were born.  
I know how sharp that cuts, since my poor wife  
Walked up and down, and still walked up and down,

And I walked after, and one could not hear  
A word the other said, for wind and sea  
That raged and beat and thundered in the night—  
The awfulest, the longest, lightest night  
That ever parents had to spend—a moon  
That shone like daylight on the breaking wave.  
Ah me ! and other men have lost their lads,  
And other women wiped their poor dead mouths,  
And got them home and dried them in the house,  
And seen the driftwood lie along the coast,  
That was a tidy boat but one day back,  
And seen next tide the neighbours gather it  
To lay it on their fires.

Ay, I was strong

And able-bodied—loved my work ;—but now  
I am a useless hull : 't is time I sank ;  
I am in all men's way ; I trouble them ;  
I am a trouble to myself : but yet  
I feel for mariners of stormy nights,  
And feel for wives that watch ashore. Ay, ay !  
If I had learning I would pray the Lord  
To bring them in : but I 'm no scholar, no ;  
Book-learning is a world too hard for me :  
But I make bold to say, O Lord, good Lord,  
I am a broken-down poor man, a fool  
To speak to Thee : but in the Book 't is writ,  
As I hear say from others that can read,  
How, when Thou camest, Thou didst love the sea,

And live with fisherfolk, whereby 't is sure  
 Thou knowest all the peril they go through,  
 And all their trouble.

As for me, good Lord,  
 I have no boat ; I am too old, too old—  
 My lads are drowned ; I buried my poor wife ;  
 My little lasses died so long ago  
 That mostly I forget what they were like.  
 Thou knowest, Lord ; they were such little ones.  
 I know they went to Thee, but I forget  
 Their faces, though I missed them sore.

O Lord,

I was a strong man ; I have drawn good food  
 And made good money out of Thy great sea :  
 But yet I cried for them at nights ; and now,  
 Although I be so old, I miss my lads,  
 And there be many folk this stormy night  
 Heavy with fear for theirs. Merciful Lord,  
 Comfort them ; save their honest boys, their pride,  
 And let them hear next ebb the blessedest,  
 Best sound—the boat-keels grating on the sand.

“ I cannot pray with finer words : I know  
 Nothing ; I have no learning, cannot learn—  
 Too old, too old. They say I want for nought,  
 I have the parish pay ; but I am dull  
 Of hearing, and the fire scarce warms me through.  
 God save me—I have been a sinful man—

And save the lives of them that still can work,  
For they are good to me ; ay, good to me.  
But, Lord, I am a trouble ! and I sit,  
And I am lonesome, and the nights are few  
That any think to come and draw a chair,  
And sit in my poor place and talk awhile.  
Why should they come, forsooth? Only the wind  
Knocks at my door, O long and loud it knocks,  
The only thing God made that has a mind  
To enter in."

Yea, thus the old man spake :  
These were the last words of his aged mouth—  
BUT ONE DID KNOCK. One came to sup with him,  
That humble, weak old man ; knocked at his door  
In the rough pauses of the labouring wind.  
I tell you that One knocked while it was dark,  
Save where their foaming passion had made white  
Those livid seething billows. What He said  
In that poor place where He did talk awhile,  
I cannot tell : but this I am assured,  
That when the neighbours came the morrow morn,  
What time the wind had bated, and the sun  
Shone on the old man's floor, they saw the smile  
He passed away in, and they said, " He looks  
As he had woke and seen the face of Christ,  
And with that rapturous smile held out his arms  
To come to Him !"



Can such an one be here,  
 So old, so weak, so ignorant, so frail?  
 The Lord be good to thee, thou poor old man ;  
 It would be hard with thee if heaven were shut  
 To such as have not learning ! Nay, nay, nay,  
 He condescends to them of low estate ;  
 To such as are despised He cometh down,  
 Stands at the door and knocks.

Yet bear with me.

I have a message ; I have more to say.  
 Shall sorrow win His pity, and not sin—  
 That burden ten times heavier to be borne ?  
 What think you ? Shall the virtuous have His care  
 Alone ? O virtuous women, think not scorn,  
 For you may lift your faces everywhere ;  
 And now that it grows dusk, and I can see  
 None though they front me straight, I fain would tell  
 A certain thing to you. I say to *you* ;  
 And if it doth concern you, as methinks  
 It doth, then surely it concerneth all.  
 I say that there was once—I say not here—  
 I say that there was once a castaway,  
 And she was weeping, weeping bitterly ;  
 Kneeling, and crying with a heart-sick cry  
 That choked itself in sobs—“ O my good name !  
 O my good name ! ” And none did hear her cry !  
 Nay ; and it lightened, and the storm-bolts fell,



And the rain splashed upon the roof, and still  
She, storm-tost as the storming elements—  
She cried with an exceeding bitter cry,  
“O my good name!” And then the thunder-cloud  
Stooped low and burst in darkness overhead,  
And rolled, and rocked her on her knees, and shook  
The frail foundations of her dwelling-place.  
But she—if any neighbours had come in  
(None did) : if any neighbours had come in,  
They might have seen her crying on her knees,  
And sobbing “Lost, lost, lost !” beating her breast—  
Her breast for ever pricked with cruel thorns,  
The wounds whereof could neither balm assuage  
Nor any patience heal—beating her brow,  
Which ached, it had been bent so long to hide  
From level eyes, whose meaning was contempt.

‘O ye good women, it is hard to leave  
The paths of virtue and return again.  
What if this sinner wept, and none of you  
Comforted her? And what if she did strive  
To mend, and none of you believed her strife,  
Nor looked upon her? Mark, I do not say,  
Though it was hard, you therefore were to blame ;  
That she had aught against you, though your feet  
Never drew near her door. But I beseech  
Your patience. Once in old Jerusalem  
A woman kneeled at consecrated feet,

Kissed them, and washed them with her tears.

What then?

I think that yet our Lord is pitiful :  
 I think I see the castaway e'en now !  
 And she is not alone : the heavy rain  
 Splashes without, and sullen thunder rolls,  
 But she is lying at the sacred feet  
 Of One transfigured.

And her tears flow down,  
 Down to her lips—her lips that kiss the print  
 Of nails ; and love is like to break her heart !  
 Love and repentance—for it still doth work  
 Sore in her soul to think, to think that she,  
 Even she, did pierce the sacred, sacred feet,  
 And bruise the thorn-crowned head.

O Lord, our Lord,  
 How great is Thy compassion ! Come, good Lord,  
 For we will open. Come this night, good Lord ;  
 Stand at the door and knock.

And is this all?—  
 Trouble, old age and simpleness, and sin—  
 This all? It might be all some other night ;  
 But this night, if a voice said “ Give account  
 Whom hast thou with thee ? ” then must I reply,  
 “ Young manhood have I, beautiful youth and strength,  
 Rich with all treasure drawn up from the crypt  
 Where lies the learning of the ancient world—  
 Brave with all thoughts that poets fling upon

The strand of life, as driftweed after storms :  
Doubtless familiar with Thy mountain heads,  
And the dread purity of Alpine snows,  
Doubtless familiar with Thy works concealed  
For ages from mankind—outlying worlds,  
And many moonèd spheres—and Thy great store  
Of stars, more thick than mealy dust which here  
Powders the pale leaves of Auriculas.

This do I know, but, Lord, I know not more.

Not more concerning them—concerning Thee,  
I know Thy bounty ; where Thou givest much  
Standing without, if any call Thee in  
Thou givest more.” Speak, then, O rich and strong :  
Open, O happy young, ere yet the hand  
Of Him that knocks, wearied at last, forbear ;  
The patient foot its thankless quest refrain,  
The wounded heart for evermore withdraw.’

I have heard many speak, but this one man—  
So anxious not to go to heaven alone—  
This one man I remember, and his look,  
Till twilight overshadowed him. He ceased,  
And out in darkness with the fisher folk  
We passed and stumbled over mounds of moss,  
And heard, but did not see, the passing beck.  
Ah, graceless heart, would that it could regain

From the dim storehouse of sensations past  
The impress full of tender awe, that night,  
Which fell on me ! It was as if the Christ  
Had been drawn down from heaven to track us home,  
And any of the footsteps following us  
Might have been His.





*A WEDDING SONG.*

**C**OME up the broad river, the Thames, my  
Dane,  
My Dane with the beautiful eyes !  
Thousands and thousands await thee full fain,  
And talk of the wind and the skies.  
Fear not from folk and from country to part,  
O, I swear it is wisely done :  
For (I said) I will bear me by thee, sweetheart,  
As becometh my father's son.

Great London was shouting as I went down.  
'She is worthy,' I said, 'of this ;  
What shall I give who have promised a crown ?  
O, first I will give her a kiss.'  
So I kissed her and brought her, my Dane, my Dane,  
Through the waving wonderful crowd :  
Thousands and thousands, they shouted amain,  
Like mighty thunders and loud.

And they said, ' He is young, the lad we love,  
The heir of the Isles is young :  
How we deem of his mother, and one gone above,  
Can neither be said nor sung.  
He brings us a pledge—he will do his part  
With the best of his race and name ;'—  
And I will, for I look to live, sweetheart,  
As may suit with my mother's fame.





*THE FOUR BRIDGES.*

**I** LOVE this grey old church, the low, long nave,  
The ivied chancel and the slender spire ;  
No less its shadow on each heaving grave,  
With growing osier bound, or living briar  
I love those yew-tree trunks, where stand arrayed  
So many deep-cut names of youth and maid.

A simple custom this—I love it well—

A carved betrothal and a pledge of truth ;  
How many an eve, their linkèd names to spell,  
Beneath the yew-trees sat our village youth !  
When work was over, and the new-cut hay  
Sent wafts of balm from meadows where it lay.

Ah ! many an eve, while I was yet a boy,  
Some village hind has beckoned me aside,  
And sought mine aid, with shy and awkward joy,  
To carve the letters of his rustic bride,  
And make them clear to read as graven stone,  
Deep in the yew-tree's trunk beside his own.

For none could carve so well, and here they stand,  
Fathers and mothers of this present race ;  
And underscored by some less practised hand,  
That fain the story of its line would trace,  
With children's names, and number, and the day  
When any called to God have passed away.

I look upon them, and I turn aside,  
As oft when carving them I did erewhile ;  
And there I see those wooden bridges wide  
That cross the marshy hollow ; there the stile  
In reeds imbedded, and the swelling down,  
And the white road toward the distant town.

But those old bridges claim another look.  
Our brattling river tumbles through the one ;  
The second spans a shallow, weedy brook ;  
Beneath the others, and beneath the sun,  
Lie two long stilly pools, and on their breasts  
Picture their wooden piles, encased in swallows' nests.

And round about them grows a fringe of reeds,  
And then a floating crown of lily flowers,  
And yet within small silver-budded weeds ;  
But each clear centre evermore embowers  
A deeper sky, where, stooping, you may see  
The little minnows darting restlessly.



My heart is bitter, lilies, at your sweet ;  
    Why did the dewdrop fringe your chalices ?  
Why in your beauty are you thus complete,  
    You silver ships—you floating palaces ?  
O ! if need be, you must allure man's eye,  
Yet wherefore blossom here ? O why ? O why ?

O ! O ! the world is wide, you lily flowers,  
    It hath warm forests, cleft by stilly pools,  
Where every night bathe crowds of stars ; and bowers  
    Of spicery hang over. Sweet air cools  
And shakes the lilies among those stars that lie :  
Why are not ye content to reign there ? Why ?

That chain of bridges, it were hard to tell  
    How it is linked with all my early joy.  
There was a little foot that I loved well,  
    It danced across them when I was a boy ;  
There was a careless voice that used to sing ;  
There was a child, a sweet and happy thing.

Oft through that matted wood of oak and birch  
    She came from yonder house upon the hill ;  
She crossed the wooden bridges to the church,  
    And watched, with village girls, my boasted skill :  
But loved to watch the floating lilies best,  
Or linger, peering in a swallow's nest ;

Linger and linger, with her wistful eyes  
    Drawn to the lily-buds that lay so white  
And soft on crimson water ; for the skies  
    Would crimson, and the little cloudlets bright  
Would all be flung among the flowers sheer down,  
To flush the spaces of their clustering crown.

Till the green rushes—O, so glossy green—  
    The rushes, they would whisper, rustle, shake  
And forth on floating gauze, no jewelled queen  
    So rich, the green-eyed dragon-flies would break,  
And hover on the flowers—aërial things,  
With little rainbows flickering on their wings.

Ah ! my heart dear ! the polished pools lie still,  
    Like lanes of water reddened by the west,  
Till, swooping down from yon o'erhanging hill,  
    The bold marsh harrier wets her tawny breast ;  
We scared her oft in childhood from her prey,  
And the old eager thoughts rise fresh as yesterday.

To yonder copse by moonlight I did go,  
    In luxury of mischief, half afraid,  
To steal the great owl's brood, her downy snow,  
    Her screaming imps to seize, the while she preyed  
With yellow, cruel eyes, whose radiant glare,  
Fell with their mother rage. I might not dare.

Panting I lay till her great fanning wings  
 Troubled the dreams of rock-doves, slumbering nigh.  
 And she and her fierce mate, like evil things,  
 Skimmed the dusk fields ; then rising, with a cry  
 Of fear, joy, triumph, darted on my prey,  
 And tore it from the nest and fled away.

But afterward, belated in the wood,  
 I saw her moping on the rifled tree,  
 And my heart smote me for her, while I stood  
 Awakened from my careless reverie ;  
 So white she looked, with moonlight round her shed,  
 So motherlike she drooped and hung her head.

O that mine eyes would cheat me ! I behold  
 The godwits running by the water edge,  
 The mossy bridges mirrored as of old ;  
 The little curlews creeping from the sedge,  
 But not the little foot so gaily light :  
 O that mine eyes would cheat me, that I might !—

Would cheat me ! I behold the gable-ends—  
 Those purple pigeons clustering on the cote,  
 The lane with maples overhung, that bends  
 Toward her dwelling ; the dry grassy moat,  
 Thick mullions, diamond-latticed, mossed and grey,  
 And walls banked up with laurel and with bay.

And up behind them yellow fields of corn,  
And still ascending countless firry spires,  
Dry slopes of hills uncultured, bare, forlorn,  
And green in rocky clefts with whins and briars ;  
Then rich cloud masses dyed the violet's hue,  
With orange sunbeams dropping swiftly through.

Ay, I beheld all this full easily ;  
My soul is jealous of my happier eyes,  
And manhood envies youth. Ah, strange to see,  
By looking merely, orange-flooded skies ;  
Nay, any dew-drop that may near me shine :  
But never more the face of Eglantine !

She was my one companion, being herself  
The jewel and adornment of my days,  
My life's completeness. O, a smiling elf,  
That I do but disparage with my praise —  
My playmate ; and I loved her dearly and long,  
And she loved me, as the tender love the strong.

Ay, but she grew, till on a time there came  
A sudden restless yearning to my heart ;  
And as we went a-nesting, all for shame  
And shyness, I did hold my peace, and start ;  
Content departed, comfort shut me out,  
And there was nothing left to talk about.

She had but sixteen years, and as for me,  
Four added made my life. This pretty bird,  
This fairy bird that I had cherished—she,  
Content, had sung, while I, contented, heard.  
The song had ceased ; the bird, with nature's art,  
Had brought a thorn and set it in my heart.

The restless birth of love my soul opprest,  
I longed and wrestled for a tranquil day,  
And warred with that disquiet in my breast  
As one who knows there is a better way ;  
But, turned against myself, I still in vain  
Looked for the ancient calm to come again.

My tired soul could to itself confess  
That she deserved a wiser love than mine ;  
To love more truly were to love her less,  
And for this truth I still awoke to pine ;  
I had a dim belief that it would be  
A better thing for her, a blessed thing for me.

Good hast Thou made them—comforters right sweet ;  
Good hast Thou made the world, to mankind lent ;  
Good are Thy dropping clouds that feed the wheat ;  
Good are Thy stars above the firmament.  
Take to Thee, take, Thy worship, Thy renown ;  
The good which Thou hast made doth wear Thy crown.

For, O my God, Thy creatures are so frail,  
 Thy bountiful creation is so fair,  
 That, drawn before us like the temple veil,  
 It hides the Holy Place from thought and care,  
 Giving man's eyes instead its sweeping fold,  
 Rich as with cherub wings and apples wrought of gold,

Purple and blue and scarlet—shimmering bells  
 And rare pomegranates on its broidered rim,  
 Glorious with chain- and fret-work that the swell  
 Of incense shakes to music dreamy and dim,  
 Till on a day comes loss, that God makes gain,  
 And death and darkness rend the veil in twain.

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Ah, sweetest ! my beloved ! each outward thing  
 Recalls my youth, and is instinct with thee ;  
 Brown wood-owls in the dusk, with noiseless wing,  
 Float from yon hanger to their haunted tree,  
 And hoot full softly. Listening, I regain  
 A flashing thought of thee with their remembered strain.

I will not pine—it is the careless brook,  
 These amber sunbeams slanting down the vale ;  
 It is the long tree-shadows, with their look  
 Of natural peace, that make my heart to fail :  
 The peace of nature—No, I will not pine—  
 But O the contrast 'twixt her face and mine !

And still I changed—I was a boy no more :  
My heart was large enough to hold my kind,  
And all the world. As hath been oft before  
With youth, I sought, but I could never find,  
Work hard enough to quiet my self-strife,  
And use the strength of action-craving life.

She, too, was changed : her bountiful sweet eyes  
Looked out full lovingly on all the world.  
O tender as the deeps in yonder skies  
Their beaming ! but her rosebud lips were curled  
With the soft dimple of a musing smile,  
Which kept my gaze, but held me mute the while.

A cast of bees, a slowly moving wain,  
The scent of bean-flowers wafted up a dell,  
Blue pigeons wheeling over fields of grain,  
Or bleat of folded lamb, would please her well ;  
Or cooing of the early coted dove ;—  
She sauntering mused of these ; I, following, mused  
love.

With her two lips, that one the other pressed  
So poutingly with such a tranquil air,  
With her two eyes, that on my own would rest  
So dream-like, she denied my silent prayer,  
Fronted unuttered words and said them nay,  
And smiled down love till it had nought to say.



The words that through mine eyes would clearly shine  
Hovered and hovered on my lips in vain ;  
If after pause I said but ' Eglantine,'  
She raised for me her quiet eyelids twain,  
And looked me this reply—look calm, yet bland—  
' I shall not know, I will not understand.'

Yet she did know my story—knew my life  
Was wrought to hers with bindings many and strong :  
That I, like Israel, servèd for a wife,  
And for the love I bare her thought not long,  
But only a few days, full quickly told,  
My seven years' service strict as his of old.

I must be brief : the twilight shadows grow,  
And steal the rose-bloom genial summer sheds,  
And scented wafts of wind that come and go  
Have lifted dew from honeyed clover heads ;  
The seven stars shine out above the mill,  
The dark delightsome woods lie veiled and still.

Hush ! hush ! the nightingale begins to sing,  
And stops, as ill-contented with her note ;  
Then breaks from out the bush with hurried wing,  
Restless and passionate. She tunes her throat,  
Laments awhile in wavering trills, and then  
Floods with a stream of sweetness all the glen.



The seven stars upon the nearest pool  
Lie trembling down betwixt the lily leaves,  
And move like glowworms ; wafting breezes cool  
Come down along the water, and it heaves  
And bubbles in the sedge ; while deep and wide  
The dim night settles on the country side.

I know this scene by heart. O ! once before  
I saw the seven stars float to and fro,  
And stayed my hurried footsteps by the shore  
To mark the starry picture spread below :  
Its silence made the tumult in my breast  
More audible ; its peace revealed my own unrest.

I paused, then hurried on ; my heart beat quick ;  
I crossed the bridges, reached the steep ascent,  
And climbed through matted fern and hazels thick ;  
Then darkling through the close green maples went  
And saw—there felt love's keenest pangs begin—  
An oriel window lighted from within—

I saw—and felt that they were scarcely cares  
Which I had known before ; I drew more near,  
And O ! methought how sore it frets and wears  
The soul to part with that it holds so dear ;  
'T is hard two woven tendrils to untwine,  
And I was come to part with Eglantine.

For life was bitter through those words repressed,  
And youth was burdened with unspoken vows ;  
Love unrequited brooded in my breast,  
And shrank, at glance, from the beloved brows :  
And three long months, heart-sick, my foot withdrawn,  
I had not sought her side by rivulet, copse, or lawn—

Not sought her side, yet busy thought no less  
Still followed in her wake, though far behind ;  
And I, being parted from her loveliness,  
Looked at the picture of her in my mind :  
I lived alone, I walked with soul opprest,  
And ever sighed for her, and sighed for rest.

Then I had risen to struggle with my heart,  
And said—‘ O heart ! the world is fresh and fair,  
And I am young ; but this thy restless smart  
Changes to bitterness the morning air :  
I will, I must, these weary fetters break—  
I will be free, if only for her sake.

‘ O let me trouble her no more with sighs !  
Heart-healing comes by distance, and with time :  
Then let me wander, and enrich mine eyes  
With the green forests of a softer clime,  
Or list by night at sea the wind’s low stave  
And long monotonous rockings of the wave.

‘ Through open solitudes, unbounded meads,  
Where, wading on breast-high in yellow bloom,  
Untamed of man, the shy white llama feeds—  
There would I journey and forget my doom ;  
Or far, O far as sunrise I would see  
The level prairie stretch away from me !

‘ Or I would sail upon the tropic seas,  
Where fathom long the blood-red dulse grow,  
Droop from the rock and waver in the breeze,  
Lashing the tide to foam ; while calm below  
The muddy mandrakes throng those waters warm,  
And purple, gold, and green, the living blossoms swarm.’

So of my father I did win consent,  
With importunities repeated long,  
To make that duty which had been my bent,  
To dig with strangers alien tombs among,  
And bound to them through desert leagues to pace,  
Or track up rivers to their starting-place.

For this I had done battle and had won,  
But not alone to tread Arabian sands,  
Measure the shadows of a southern sun,  
Or dig out gods in the old Egyptian lands ;  
But for the dream wherewith I thought to cope—  
The grief of love unmated with love’s hope.

And now I would set reason in array,  
Methought, and fight for freedom manfully,  
Till by long absence there would come a day  
When this my love would not be pain to me ;  
But if I knew my rosebud fair and blest  
I should not pine to wear it on my breast.

The days fled on ; another week should fling  
A foreign shadow on my lengthening way ;  
Another week, yet nearness did not bring  
A braver heart that hard farewell to say.  
I let the last day wane, the dusk begin,  
Ere I had sought that window lighted from within.

Sinking and sinking, O my heart ! my heart !  
Will absence heal thee whom its shade doth rend ?  
I reached the little gate, and soft within  
The oriel fell her shadow. She did lend  
Her loveliness to me, and let me share  
The listless sweetness of those features fair.

Among thick laurels in the gathering gloom,  
Heavy for this our parting, I did stand ;  
Beside her mother in the lighted room,  
She sitting leaned her cheek upon her hand ;  
And as she read, her sweet voice floating through  
The open casement seemed to mourn me an adieu.

Youth ! youth ! how buoyant are thy hopes ! they turn,  
Like marigolds, toward the sunny side.  
My hopes were buried in a funeral urn,  
And they sprang up like plants and spread them wide ;  
Though I had schooled and reasoned them away,  
They gathered smiling near and prayed a holiday.

Ah, sweetest voice ! how pensive were its tones,  
And how regretful its unconscious pause !  
Is it for me her heart this sadness owns,  
And is our parting of to-night the cause ?  
Ah, would it might be so ! ' I thought, and stood  
Listening entranced among the underwood.

I thought it would be something worth the pain  
Of parting, to look once in those deep eyes,  
And take from them an answering look again :  
' When eastern palms,' I thought, ' about me rise,  
If I might carve our names upon the rind,  
Betrothed, I would not mourn, though leaving thee be-  
hind.'

I can be patient, faithful, and most fond  
To unacknowledged love ; I can be true  
To this sweet thralldom, this unequal bond,  
This yoke of mine that reaches not to you :  
O, how much more could costly parting buy—  
If not a pledge, one kiss, or, failing that, a sigh !

I listened, and she ceased to read ; she turned  
Her face toward the laurels where I stood :  
Her mother spoke--O wonder ! hardly learned ;  
She said, ' There is a rustling in the wood ;  
Ah, child ! if one draw near to bid farewell,  
Let not thine eyes an unsought secret tell.

' My daughter, there is nothing held so dear  
As love, if only it be hard to win.  
The roses that in yonder hedge appear  
Outdo our garden-buds which bloom within ;  
But since the hand may pluck them every day,  
Unmarked they bud, bloom, drop, and drift away.

' My daughter, my beloved, be not you  
Like those same roses.' O bewildering word !  
My heart stood still, a mist obscured my view :  
It cleared ; still silence. No denial stirred  
The lips beloved ; but straight, as one opprest,  
She, kneeling, dropped her face upon her mother's  
breast.

This said, ' My daughter, sorrow comes to all ;  
Our life is checked with shadows manifold :  
But woman has this more—she may not call  
Her sorrow by its name. Yet love not told,  
And only born of absence and by thought,  
With thought and absence may return to nought.'

And my belovèd lifted up her face,  
    And moved her lips as if about to speak ;  
She dropped her lashes with a girlish grace,  
    And the rich damask mantled in her cheek.  
I stood awaiting till she should deny  
Her love, or with sweet laughter put it by.

But, closer nestling to her mother's heart,  
    She, blushing, said no word to break my trance,  
For I was breathless ; and, with lips apart,  
    Felt my breast pant and all my pulses dance, .  
And strove to move, but could not for the weight  
Of unbelieving joy, so sudden and so great,

Because she loved me. With a mighty sigh  
    Breaking away, I left her on her knees,  
And blest the laurel bower, the darkened sky,  
    The sultry night of August. Through the trees,  
Giddy with gladness, to the porch I went,  
And hardly found the way for joyful wonderment.

Yet, when I entered, saw her mother sit  
    With both hands cherishing the graceful head,  
Smoothing the clustered hair, and parting it  
    From the fair brow ; she, rising, only said,  
In the accustomed tone, the accustomed word,  
The careless greeting that I always heard ;



And she resumed her merry, mocking smile,  
    Though tear-drops on the glistening lashes hung.  
O woman ! thou wert fashioned to beguile :  
    So have all sages said, all poets sung.  
She spoke of favouring winds and waiting ships,  
With smiles of gratulation on her lips !

And then she looked and faltered : I had grown  
    So suddenly in life and soul a man :  
She moved her lips, but could not find a tone  
    To set her mocking music to ; began  
One struggle for dominion, raised her eyes,  
And straight withdrew them, bashful through surprise.

The colour over cheek and bosom flushed ;  
    I might have heard the beating of her heart,  
But that mine own beat louder ; when she blushed,  
    The hand within mine own I felt to start,  
But would not change my pitiless decree  
To strive with her for might and mastery.

She looked again, as one that, half afraid,  
    Would fain be certain of a doubtful thing ;  
Or one beseeching ' Do not me upbraid ! '  
    And then she trembled like the fluttering  
Of timid little birds, and silent stood,  
No smile wherewith to mock my hardihood.



She turned, and to an open casement moved  
With girlish shyness, mute beneath my gaze,  
And I on downcast lashes unreprieved  
Could look as long as pleased me ; while, the rays  
Of moonlight round her, she her fair head bent,  
In modest silence to my words attent.

How fast the giddy whirling moments flew !  
The moon had set ; I heard the midnight chime ;  
Hope is more brave than fear, and joy than dread,  
And I could wait unmoved the parting time.  
It came ; for by a sudden impulse drawn,  
She, risen, stepped out upon the dusky lawn.

A little waxen taper in her hand,  
Her feet upon the dry and dewless grass,  
She looked like one of the celestial band,  
Only that on her cheeks did dawn and pass  
Most human blushes ; while, the soft light thrown  
On vesture pure and white, she seemed yet fairer grown.

Her mother, looking out toward her, sighed,  
Then gave her hand in token of farewell,  
And with her warning eyes, that seemed to chide,  
Scarce suffered that I sought her child to tell  
The story of my life, whose every line  
No other burden bore than—Eglantine.

Black thunder-clouds were rising up behind,  
The waxen taper burned full steadily ;  
It seemed as if dark midnight had a mind  
To hear what lovers say, and her decree  
Had passed for silence, while she, dropped to ground  
With raiment floating wide, drank in the sound.

O happiness ! thou dost not leave a trace  
So well defined as sorrow. Amber light,  
Shed like a glory on her angel face,  
I can remember fully, and the sight  
Of her fair forehead and her shining eyes,  
And lips that smiled in sweet and girlish wise.

I can remember how the taper played  
Over her small hands and her vesture white ;  
How it struck up into the trees, and laid  
Upon their under leaves unwonted light ;  
And when she held it low, how far it spread  
O'er velvet pansies slumbering on their bed.

I can remember that we spoke full low,  
That neither doubted of the other's truth ;  
And that with footsteps slower and more slow,  
Hands folded close for love, eyes wet for ruth :  
Beneath the trees, by that clear taper's flame,  
We wandered till the gate of parting came.

But I forget the parting words she said,  
So much they thrilled the all-attentive soul ;  
For one short moment human heart and head  
May bear such bliss—its present is the whole :  
I had that present, till in whispers fell  
With parting gesture her subdued farewell.

Farewell ! she said, in act to turn away,  
But stood a moment yet to dry her tears,  
And suffered my enfolding arm to stay  
The time of her departure. O ye years  
That intervene betwixt that day and this !  
You all received your hue from that keen pain and bliss.

O mingled pain and bliss ! O pain to break  
At once from happiness so lately found,  
And four long years to feel for her sweet sake  
The incompleteness of all sight and sound !  
But bliss to cross once more the foaming brine—  
O bliss to come again and make her mine !

I cannot—O, I cannot more recall !  
But I will soothe my troubled thoughts to rest  
With musing over journeyings wide, and all  
Observance of this active-humoured west,  
And swarming cities steeped in eastern day,  
With swarthy tribes in gold and striped array.

I turn from these, and straight there will succeed  
    (Shifting and changing at the restless will),  
Imbedded in some deep Circassian mead,  
    White wagon-tilts, and flocks that eat their fill  
Unseen above, while comely shepherds pass,  
And scarcely show their heads above the grass.

—The red Sahara in an angry glow,  
    With amber fogs, across its hollows trailed  
Long strings of camels, gloomy-eyed and slow,  
    And women on their necks, from gazers veiled,  
And sun-swart guides who toil across the sand  
To groves of date-trees on the watered land.

Again—the brown sails of an Arab boat,  
    Flashing by night upon a glassy sea,  
Whereon the moon and planets seem to float,  
    More bright of hue than they were wont to be,  
While shooting-stars rain down with crackling sound,  
And, thick as swarming locusts, drop to ground.

Or far into the heat among the sands  
    The gembok nations, snuffing up the wind,  
Drawn by the scent of water—and the bands  
    Of tawny-bearded lions pacing, blind  
With the sun-dazzle in their midst, opprest  
With prey, and spiritless for lack of rest !

What more? Old Lebanon, the frosty-browed,  
 Setting his feet among oil-olive trees,  
 Heaving his bare brown shoulder through a cloud ;  
 And after, grassy Carmel, purple seas,  
 Flattering his dreams and echoing in his rocks,  
 Soft as the bleating of his thousand flocks.

Enough : how vain this thinking to beguile,  
 With recollected scenes, an aching breast !  
 Did not I, journeying, muse on her the while?  
 Ah, yes ! for every landscape comes impressed—  
 Ay, written on, as by an iron pen—  
 With the same thought I nursed about her then.

Therefore let memory turn again to home ;  
 Feel, as of old, the joy of drawing near ;  
 Watch the green breakers and the wind-tossed foam,  
 And see the land-fog break, dissolve, and clear ;  
 Then think a skylark's voice far sweeter sound  
 Than ever thrilled but over English ground ;

And walk, glad, even to tears, among the wheat,  
 Not doubting this to be the first of lands ;  
 And, while in foreign words this murmuring, meet  
 Some little village schoolgirls (with their hands  
 Full of forget-me-nots), who greeting me,  
 I count their English talk delightful melody ;

And seat me on a bank, and draw them near,  
That I may feast myself with hearing it,  
Till shortly they forget their bashful fear,  
Push back their flaxen curls, and round me sit—  
Tell me their names, their daily tasks, and show  
Where wild wood strawberries in the copses grow.

So passed the day in this delightful land :  
My heart was thankful for the English tongue—  
For English sky with feathery cloudlets spanned—  
For English hedge with glistening dewdrops hung.  
I journeyed, and at glowing eventide  
Stopped at a rustic inn by the wayside.

That night I slumbered sweetly, being right glad  
To miss the flapping of the shrouds ; but lo !  
A quiet dream of beings twain I had,  
Behind the curtain talking soft and low :  
Methought I did not heed their utterance fine,  
Till one of them said softly, ' Eglantine.'

I started up awake, 't was silence all :  
My own fond heart had shaped that utterance clear ;  
And ' Ah ! ' methought, ' how sweetly did it fall,  
Though but in dream, upon the listening ear !  
How sweet from other lips the name well known—  
That name, so many a year heard only from mine own !'

I thought awhile, then slumber came to me,  
And tangled all my fancy in her maze,  
And I was drifting on a raft at sea,  
The near all ocean, and the far all haze ;  
Through the white polished water sharks did glide,  
And up in heaven I saw no stars to guide.

‘ Have mercy, God ! ’ but lo ! my raft uprose ;  
Drip, drip, I heard the water splash from it ;  
My raft had wings, and as the petrel goes,  
It skimmed the sea, then brooding seemed to sit  
The milk-white mirror, till, with sudden spring,  
It flew straight upward like a living thing.

But strange !—I went not also in that flight,  
For I was entering at a cavern’s mouth ;  
Trees grew within, and screaming birds of night  
Sat on them, hiding from the torrid south.  
On, on I went, while gleaming in the dark  
Those trees with blanchèd leaves stood pale and stark.

The trees had flower-buds, nourished in deep night,  
And suddenly, as I went farther in,  
They opened, and they shot out lambent light ;  
Then all at once arose a railing din  
That frightened me : ‘ It is the ghosts, ’ I said,  
‘ And they are railing for their darkness fled.



‘ I hope they will not look me in the face ;  
It frighteth me to hear their laughter loud ;’  
I saw them troop before with jaunty pace,  
And one would shake off dust that soiled her shroud :  
But now, O joy unhopèd ! to calm my dread,  
Some moonlight filterèd through a cleft o’erhead.

I climbed the lofty trees—the blanchèd trees—  
The cleft was wide enough to let me through ;  
I clambered out and felt the balmy breeze,  
And stepped on churchyard grasses wet with dew.  
O happy chance ! O fortune to admire !  
I stood beside my own loved village spire.

And as I gazed adown the dimness blank,  
Lo, far off music—music in the night !  
So clear and tender as it swelled and sank ;  
It charmed me till I wept with keen delight,  
And in my dream, methought as it drew near  
The very clouds in heaven stooped low to hear.

Beat high, beat low, wild heart so deeply stirred,  
For high as heaven runs up the piercing strain ;  
The restless music fluttering like a bird  
Bemoaned herself, and dropped to earth again,  
Heaping up sweetness till I was afraid  
That I should die of grief when it did fade.



And it DID fade ; but while with eager ear  
I drank its last long echo dying away,  
I was aware of footsteps that drew near,  
And round the ivied chancel seemed to stray :  
O soft about the hallowed place they trod—  
Soft as the fall of foot that is not shod !

I turned—'t was even so—yes, Eglantine !  
For at the first I had divined the same ;  
I saw the moon on her shut eyelids shine,  
And said ' She is asleep : ' still on she came ;  
Then, on her dimpled feet, I saw it gleam,  
And thought—' I know that this is but a dream.'

My darling ! O my darling ! not the less  
My dream went on because I knew it such ;  
She came toward me in her loveliness --  
A thing too pure, methought, for mortal touch ;  
The rippling gold did on her bosom meet,  
The long white robe descended to her feet.

The fringed lids dropped low, as sleep-oppressed ;  
Her dreamy smile was very fair to see,  
And her two hands were folded to her breast,  
With somewhat held between them heedfully.  
O fast asleep ! and yet methought she knew  
And felt my nearness those shut eyelids through.

She sighed : my tears ran down for tenderness—  
‘ And have I drawn thee to me in my sleep ?  
Is it for me thou wanderest shelterless,  
Wetting thy steps in dewy grasses deep ?  
O if this be ! ’ I said—‘ yet speak to me ;  
I blame my very dream for cruelty.’

Then from her stainless bosom she did take  
Two beauteous lily flowers that lay therein,  
And with slow-moving lips a gesture make,  
As one that some forgotten words doth win :  
‘ They floated on the pool,’ methought she said,  
And water trickled from each lily’s head.

It dropped upon her feet—I saw it gleam  
Along the ripples of her yellow hair,  
And stood apart, for only in a dream  
She would have come, methought, to meet me there.  
She spoke again—‘ Ah fair ! ah fresh they shine !  
And there are many left, and these are mine.’

I answered her with flattering accents meet—  
‘ Love, they are whitest lilies e’er were blown.’  
‘ And sayest thou so ? ’ she sighed in murmurs sweet ;  
‘ I have nought else to give thee now, mine own !  
For it is night. Then take them, love ! ’ said she :  
‘ They have been costly flowers to thee—and me.’

While thus she said I took them from her hand,  
And, overcome with love and nearness, woke ;  
And overcome with ruth that she should stand  
Barefooted on the grass ; that, when she spoke,  
Her mystic words should take so sweet a tone,  
And of all names her lips should choose ' My own.'

I rose, I journeyed, neared my home, and soon  
Beheld the spire peer out above the hill :  
It was a sunny harvest afternoon,  
When by the churchyard wicket, standing still,  
I cast my eager eyes abroad to know  
If change had touched the scenes of long ago.

I looked across the hollow ; sunbeams shone  
Upon the old house with the gable-ends :  
' Save that the laurel-trees are taller grown,  
No change,' methought, ' to its grey wall extends.  
What clear bright beams on yonder lattice shine !  
There did I sometime talk with Eglantine.'

There standing with my very goal in sight,  
Over my haste did sudden quiet steal ;  
I thought to dally with my own delight,  
Nor rush on headlong to my garnered weal,  
But taste the sweetness of a short delay,  
And for a little moment hold the bliss at bay.

The church was open ; it perchance might be  
That there to offer thanks I might essay,  
Or rather, as I think, that I might see  
The place where Eglantine was wont to pray.  
But so it was ; I crossed that portal wide,  
And felt my riot joy to calm subside.

The low depending curtains, gently swayed,  
Cast over arch and roof a crimson glow ;  
But, ne'ertheless, all silence and all shade  
It seemed, save only for the rippling flow  
Of their long foldings, when the sunset air  
Sighed through the casements of the house of prayer.

I found her place, the ancient oaken stall,  
Where in her childhood I had seen her sit,  
Most saint-like and most tranquil there of all,  
Folding her hands, as if a dreaming fit—  
A heavenly vision had before her strayed  
Of the Eternal Child in lowly manger laid.

I saw her prayer-book laid upon the seat,  
And took it in my hand, and felt more near  
In fancy to her, finding it most sweet  
To think how very oft, low kneeling there,  
In her devout thoughts she had let me share,  
And set my graceless name in her pure prayer.

My eyes were dazzled with delightful tears—  
In sooth they were the last I ever shed ;  
For with them fell the cherished dreams of years.  
I looked, and on the wall above my head,  
Over her seat, there was a tablet placed,  
With one word only on the marble traced.—

Ah, well ! I would not overstate that woe,  
For I have had some blessings, little care ;  
But since the falling of that heavy blow,  
God's earth has never seemed to me so fair ;  
Nor any of His creatures so divine,  
Nor sleep so sweet ;—the word was—*EGLANTINE*.





*A MOTHER SHOWING THE PORTRAIT  
OF HER CHILD.*

(F. M. L.)

**L**IVING CHILD or pictured cherub  
Ne'er o'ermatched its baby grace ;  
And the mother, moving nearer,  
Looked it calmly in the face ;

Then with slight and quiet gesture,  
And with lips that scarcely smiled,  
Said—' A Portrait of my daughter  
When she was a child.'

Easy thought was hers to fathom,  
Nothing hard her glance to read,  
For it seemed to say, ' No praises  
For this little child I need :  
If you see, I see far better,  
And I will not feign to care  
For a stranger's prompt assurance  
That the face is fair.'

Softly clasped and half extended,  
 She her dimpled hands doth lay :  
 So they doubtless placed them, saying—  
 ‘ Little one, you must not play.’  
 And while yet his work was growing,  
 This the painter’s hand hath shown,  
 That the little heart was making  
 Pictures of its own.

Is it warm in that green valley,  
 Vale of childhood, where you dwell?  
 Is it calm in that green valley,  
 Round whose bournes such great hills swell?  
 Are there giants in the valley—  
 Giants leaving footprints yet?  
 Are there angels in the valley?  
 Tell me—I forget.

Answer, answer, for the lilies,  
 Little one, o’ertop you much,  
 And the mealy gold within them  
 You can scarcely reach to touch ;  
 O how far their aspect differs,  
 Looking up and looking down !  
 You look up in that green valley—  
 Valley of renown.

Are there voices in the valley,  
Lying near the heavenly gate ?  
When it opens, do the harp-strings,  
Touched within, reverberate ?  
When, like shooting-stars, the angels  
To your couch at nightfall go,  
Are their swift wings heard to rustle ?  
Tell me ! for you know.

Yes, you know ; and you are silent,  
Not a word shall asking win ;  
Little mouth more sweet than rosebud,  
Fast it locks the secret in.  
Not a glimpse upon your present  
You unfold to glad my view ;  
Ah, what secrets of your future  
I could tell to you !

Sunny present ! thus I read it,  
By remembrance of my past :—  
Its to-day and its to-morrow  
Are as lifetimes vague and vast ;  
And each face in that green valley  
Takes for you an aspect mild,  
And each voice grows soft in saying—  
‘ Kiss me, little child ! ’



As a boon the kiss is granted :  
    Baby mouth, your touch is sweet,  
Takes the love without the trouble  
    From those lips that with it meet ;  
Gives the love, O pure ! O tender !  
    Of the valley where it grows,  
But the baby heart receiveth  
        MORE THAN IT BESTOWS.

Comes the future to the present—  
    ‘ Ah ! ’ she saith, ‘ too blithe of mood ;  
Why that smile which seems to whisper—  
    “ I am happy, God is good ” ?  
God is good : that truth eternal  
    Sown for you in happier years,  
I must tend it in my shadow,  
        Water it with tears.

‘ Ah, sweet present ! I must lead thee  
    By a daylight more subdued ;  
There must teach thee low to whisper—  
    “ I am mournful, God is good ! ” ’  
Peace, thou future ! clouds are coming,  
    Stooping from the mountain crest,  
But that sunshine floods the valley ;  
        Let her—let her rest.

Comes the future to the present—  
‘Child,’ she saith, ‘and wilt thou rest ?  
How long, child, before thy footsteps  
Fret to reach yon cloudy crest ?  
Ah, the valley !—angels guard it,  
But the heights are brave to see ;  
Looking down were long contentment :  
Come up, child, to me.’

So she speaks, but do not heed her,  
Little maid with wondrous eyes,  
Not afraid, but clear and tender,  
Blue, and filled with prophecies ;  
Thou for whom life’s veil unlifted  
Hangs, whom warmest valleys fold,  
Lift the veil, the charm dissolveth—  
Climb, but heights are cold.

There are buds that fold within them,  
Closed and covered from our sight,  
Many a richly-tinted petal,  
Never looked on by the light :  
Fain to see their shrouded faces,  
Sun and dew are long at strife,  
Till at length the sweet buds open—  
Such a bud is life.

When the rose of thine own being  
    Shall reveal its central fold,  
Thou shalt look within and marvel,  
    Fearing what thine eyes behold ;  
What it shows and what it teaches  
    Are not things wherewith to part ;  
Thorny rose ! that always costeth  
    Beatings at the heart.

Look in fear, for there is dimness,  
    Ills unshapen float anigh.  
Look in awe : for this same nature  
    Once the Godhead deigned to die.  
Look in love, for He doth love it,  
    And its tale is best of lore :  
Still humanity grows dearer,  
    Being learned the more.

Learn, but not the less bethink thee  
    How that all can mingle tears ;  
But his joy can none discover,  
    Save to them that are his peers ;  
And that they whose lips do utter  
    Language such as bards have sung—  
Lo ! their speech shall be to many  
    As an unknown tongue.

Learn, that if to thee the meaning  
Of all other eyes be shown,  
Fewer eyes can ever front thee  
That are skilled to read thine own ;  
And that if thy love's deep current  
Many another's far outflows,  
Then thy heart must take for ever  
LESS THAN IT BESTOWS.





*STRIFE AND PEACE.*

(Written for THE PORTFOLIO SOCIETY, October 1861.)

**T**HE yellow poplar leaves came down  
    . And like a carpet lay,  
No waftings were in the sunny air  
    To flutter them away ;  
And he stepped on blithe and debonair  
    That warm October day.

‘The boy,’ saith he, ‘hath got his own,  
    But sore has been the fight,  
For ere his life began the strife  
    That ceased but yesternight ;  
For the will,’ he said, ‘the kinsfolk read,  
    And read it not aright.

‘His cause was argued in the court  
    Before his christening day,  
And counsel was heard, and judge demurred.  
    And bitter waxed the fray ;  
Brother with brother spake no word  
    When they met in the way.

‘ Against each one did each contend,  
And all against the heir.  
I would not bend, for I knew the end—  
I have it for my share,  
And nought repent, though my first friend  
From henceforth I must spare.

‘ Manor and moor and farm and wold  
Their greed begrudged him sore,  
And parchments old with passionate hold  
They guarded heretofore ;  
And they carped at signature and seal,  
But they may carp no more.

‘ An old affront will stir the heart  
Through years of rankling pain,  
And I feel the fret that urged me yet  
That warfare to maintain ;  
For an enemy’s loss may well be set  
Above an infant’s gain.

‘ An enemy’s loss I go to prove ;  
Laugh out, thou little heir !  
Laugh in his face who vowed to chase  
Thee from thy birthright fair ;  
For I come to set thee in thy place :  
Laugh out, and do not spare.’

A man of strife, in wrathful mood  
He neared the nurse's door ;  
With poplar leaves the roof and eaves  
Were thickly scattered o'er,  
And yellow as they a sunbeam lay  
Along the cottage floor.

' Sleep on, thou pretty, pretty lamb,  
He hears the fond nurse say ;  
' And if angels stand at thy right hand,  
As now belike they may,  
And if angels meet at thy bed's feet,  
I fear them not this day.

' Come wealth, come want to thee, dear heart,  
It was all one to me,  
For thy pretty tongue far sweeter rung  
' Than coinèd gold and fee ;  
And ever the while thy waking smile  
It was right fair to see.

Sleep, pretty bairn, and never know  
Who grudged and who transgressed ;  
Thee to retain I was full fain,  
But God, He knoweth best !  
And His peace upon thy brow lies plain  
As the sunshine on thy breast !'

The man of strife, he enters in,  
Looks, and his pride doth cease ;  
Anger and sorrow shall be to-morrow  
Trouble, and no release ;  
But the babe whose life awoke the strife  
Hath entered into peace.







*LETTERS ON LIFE AND THE MORNING.*

*(First of a Series.)*

A PARSON'S LETTER TO A YOUNG POET.

**T**HEY said 'Too late, too late, the work is  
done ;  
Great Homer sang of glory and strong men  
And that fair Greek whose fault all these long  
years

Wins no forgetfulness nor ever can ;  
For yet cold eyes upon her frailty bend,  
For yet the world waits in the victor's tent  
Daily, and sees an old man honourable,  
His white head bowed, surprise to passionate tears  
Awestruck Achilles ; sighing, " I have endured  
The like whereof no soul hath yet endured,  
To kiss the hand of him that slew my son."'

They said : ' We, rich by him, are rich by more ;  
One Æschylus found watchfires on a hill

That lit Old Night's three daughters to their work ;  
When the forlorn Fate leaned to their red light  
And sat a-spinning, to her feet he came  
And marked her till she span off all her thread.

O, it is late, good sooth, to cry for more :  
The work once done, well done,' they said, ' forbear !  
A Tuscan afterward discovered steps  
Over the line of life in its mid-way ;  
He climbed the wall of Heaven, beheld his love  
Safe at her singing, and he left his foes  
In a vale of shadow weltering, unassoiled  
Immortal sufferers henceforth in both worlds.

Who may inherit next or who shall match  
The Swan of Avon and go float with him  
Down the long river of life aneath a sun  
Not veiled, and high at noon ? — the river of life  
That as it ran reflected all its lapse  
And rippling on the plumage of his breast ?

Thou hast them, heed them, for thy poets now,  
Albeit of tongue full sweet and majesty  
Like even to theirs, are fallen on evil days,  
Are wronged by thee of life, wronged of the world.  
Look back they must and show thee thy fair past,  
Or, choosing thy to-day, they may but chant  
As they behold.

The mother-glowworm broods  
Upon her young, fast folded in the egg  
And long before they come to life they shine—  
The mother-age broods on her shining thought  
That liveth, but whose life is hid. He comes  
Her poet son, and lo you, he can see  
The shining, and he takes it to his breast  
And fashions for it wings that it may fly  
And show its sweet light in the dusky world.

Mother, O Mother of our dusk to-day,  
What hast thou lived for bards to sing of thee?  
Lapsed water cannot flow above its source ;  
“ *The kid must browse,*” they said, “ *where she is tied.*”

Son of to-day, rise up, and answer them.  
What ! wilt thou let thy mother sit ashamed  
And crownless?—Set the crown on her fair head :  
She waited for thy birth, she cries to thee  
‘ Thou art the man.’ He that hath ears to hear,  
To him the mother cries ‘ Thou art the man.’

She murmurs, for thy mother’s voice is low—  
‘ Methought the men of war were even as gods,  
The old men of the ages. Now mine eyes  
Retrieve the truth from ruined city walls  
That buried it ; from carved and curious homes  
Full of rich garments and all goodly spoil,

Where having burned, battered, and wasted them,  
They flung it. Give us, give us better gods  
Than these that drink with blood upon their hands,  
For I repent me that I worshipped them.  
O that there might be yet a going up!  
O to forget—and to begin again!

Is not thy mother's rede at one with theirs  
Who cry 'The work is done'? What though to  
thee,  
Thee only, should the utterance shape itself  
'O to forget, and to begin again,'  
Only of thee be heard as that keen cry  
Rending its way from some distracted heart  
That yields it and so breaks? Yet list the cry  
Begin for her again, and learn to sing;  
But first, in all thy learning learn to be.  
Is life a field? then plough it up—re-sow  
With worthier seed—Is life a ship? O heed  
The southing of thy stars—Is life a breath?  
Breathe deeper, draw life up from hour to hour,  
Aye, from the deepest deep in thy deep soul.

It may be God's first work is but to breathe  
And fill the abysm with drifts of shining air  
That slowly, slowly curdle into worlds.  
A little space is measured out to us  
Of His long leisure; breathe and grow therein,

For life, alas ! is short, and '*when we die*  
*It is not for a little while.*'

They said,  
'The work is done,' and is it therefore done?  
Speak rather to thy mother thus : 'All-fair,  
Lady of ages, beautiful To-day  
And sorrowful To-day, thy children set  
The crown of sorrow on their heads, their loss  
Is like to be the loss of all : we hear  
Lamenting, as of some that mourn in vain  
Loss of high leadership, but where is he  
That shall be great enough to lead thee now ?

Where is thy Poet? thou hast wanted him.  
Where? Thou hast wakened as a child in the night  
And found thyself alone. The stars have set,  
There is great darkness, and the dark is void  
Of music. Who shall set thy life afresh  
And sing thee thy new songs? Whom wilt thou love  
And lean on to break silence worthily—  
Discern the beauty in thy goings—feel  
The glory of thy yearning,—thy self-scorn  
Flatter to dim oblivion with a smile—  
Own thy great want, that knew not its great name?  
O who shall make to thee mighty amends  
For thy lost childhood, joining two in one,  
Thyself and Him? Behold Him, He is near :  
God is thy Poet now.

A King sang once  
Long years ago 'My soul is athirst for God,  
Yea for the living God'—thy thirst and his  
Are one. It is thy Poet whom thy hands  
Grope for, not knowing. Life is not enough,  
Nor love, nor learning,—Death is not enough  
Even to them, happy, who forecast new life ;  
But give us now and satisfy us now,  
Give us now, now, to live in the life of God,  
Give us now, now, to be at one with Him.'

Would I had words—I have not words for her,  
Only for thee ; and thus I tell them out :  
For every man the world is made afresh ;  
To God both it and he are young. There are  
Who call upon Him night, and morn, and night  
'Where is the kingdom? Give it us to-day.  
We would be here with God, not there with God.  
Make Thine abode with us, great Wayfarer,  
And let our souls sink deeper into Thee'—  
There are who send but yearnings forth, in quest  
They know not why, of good they know not what.

The unknown life, and strange its stirring is.  
The babe knows nought of life, yet clothed in it  
And yearning only for its mother's breast  
Feeds thus the unheeded thing—and as for thee,  
That life thou hast is hidden from thine eyes,

And when it yearns, thou, knowing not for what,  
Wouldst fain appease it with one grand, deep joy,  
One draught of passionate peace—but wilt thou  
know

The other name of joy, the better name  
Of peace? It is thy Father's name. Thy life  
Yearns to its Source. The spirit thirsts for God,  
Even the living God.

But 'No,' thou sayest,  
' My heart is all in ruins with pain, my feet  
Tread a dry desert where there is no way  
Nor water. I look back, and deep through time  
The old words come but faintly up the track  
Trod by the sons of men. The man He sent,  
The Prince of life, methinks I could have loved  
If I had looked once in His deep man's eyes.  
But long ago He died, and long ago  
Is gone.'

He is not dead, He cannot go.  
Men's faith at first was like a mastering stream,  
Like Jordan 'the descender' leaping down  
Pure from his snow ; and warmed of tropic heat  
Hiding himself in verdure : then at last  
In a Dead Sea absorbed, as faith of doubt.  
But yet the snow lies thick on Hermon's breast  
And daily at his source the stream is born.  
Go up—go mark the whiteness of the snow—  
Thy faith is not thy Saviour, not thy God,



Though faith waste fruitless down a desert old.  
The living God is new, and He is near.

What need to look behind thee and to sigh?  
When God left speaking He went on before  
To draw men after, following up and on ;  
And thy heart fails because thy feet are slow ;  
Thou think'st of Him as one that will not wait.  
A Father and not wait !--He waited long  
For us, and yet perchance He thinks not long  
And will not count the time. ' There are no dates  
In His fine leisure.

Speak then as a son :

' Father, I come to satisfy Thy love  
With mine, for I had held Thee as remote,  
The background of the stars—Time's yesterday—  
Illimitable Absence. Now my heart  
Communes, methinks, with somewhat teaching me  
Thou art the Great To-day. God, is it so?  
Then for all love that was, I thank Thee, God,  
It is and yet shall bide. And I have part  
In all, for in Thine image I was made,  
To Thee my spirit yearns, as Thou to mine.  
If aught be stamped of Thy Divine on me,  
And man be God-like, God is like to man.

Dear and dread Lord, I have not found it hard  
To fear Thee, though Thy love in visible form



Bled 'neath a thorny crown—but since indeed,  
For kindred's sake and likeness, Thou dost thirst  
To draw men nigh, and make them one with Thee,  
My soul shall answer 'Thou art what I want :  
I am athirst for God, the living God.'

Then straightway flashes up athwart the words :  
'And if I be a son I am very far  
From my great Father's house ; I am not clean.  
I have not always willed it should be so,  
And the gold of life is rusted with my tears.'

It is enough. He never said to men,  
'Seek ye My face in vain.' And have they sought—  
Beautiful children, well-belovèd sons,  
Opening wide eyes to ache among the moons  
All night, and sighing because star multitudes  
Fainted away as to a glittering haze,  
And sparkled here and there like silver wings,  
Confounding them with nameless, numberless,  
Unbearable, fine flocks? It is not well  
For them, for thee. Hast thou gone forth so far  
To the unimaginable steeps on high  
Trembling and seeking God? Yet now come home,  
Cry, cry to Him : 'I cannot search Thee out,  
But Thou and I must meet. O come, come down,  
Come.' And that cry shall have the mastery.  
Ay, He shall come in truth to visit thee,

And thou shalt mourn to Him, 'Unclean, unclean,'  
But never more 'I will to have it so.'  
From henceforth thou shalt learn that there is love  
To long for, pureness to desire, a mount  
Of consecration it were good to scale.

Look you, it is to-day as at the first.  
When Adam first was 'ware his new-made eyes  
And opened them, behold the light! And breath  
Of God was misting yet about his mouth,  
Whereof they had made his soul. Then he looked  
forth

And was a part of light; also he saw  
Beautiful life, and it could move. But Eve—  
Eve was the child of midnight and of sleep.  
Lo, in the dark God led her to his side;  
It may be in the dark she heard him breathe  
Before God woke him. And she knew not light,  
Nor life but as a voice that left his lips,  
A warmth that clasped her; but the stars were out,  
And she with wide child-eyes gazed up at them.  
Haply she thought that always it was night;  
Haply he, whispering to her in that reach  
Of beauteous darkness, gave her unworn heart  
A rumour of the dawn, and wakened it  
To a trembling, and a wonder, and a want  
Kin to his own; and as he longed to gaze  
On his new fate, the gracious mystery

His wife, she may have longed, and felt not why,  
After the light that never she had known.

So doth each age walk in the light beheld,  
Nor think on light, if it be light or no ;  
Then comes the night to it, and in the night  
Eve.

The God-given, the most beautiful  
Eve. And she is not seen for darkness' sake ;  
Yet, when she makes her gracious presence felt,  
The age perceives how dark it is, and fain,  
Fain would have daylight, fain would see her well,  
A beauty half revealed, a helpmeet sent  
To draw the soul away from valley clods ;  
Made from itself, yet now a better self—  
Soul in the soulless, arrow tipped with fire  
Let down into a careless breast ; a pang  
Sweeter than healing that cries out with it  
For light all light, and is beheld at length—  
The morning dawns.

Were not we born to light?  
Ay, and we saw the men and women as saints  
Walk in a garden. All our thoughts were fair ;  
Our simple hearts, as dovecotes full of doves,  
Made home and nest for them. They fluttered forth,  
And flocks of them flew white about the world.  
And dreams were like to ships that floated us  
Far out on silent floods, apart from earth,

From life—so far that we could see their lights  
In heaven—and hear the everlasting tide,  
All dappled with that fair reflected gold,  
Wash up against the city wall, and sob  
At the dark bows of vessels that drew on  
Heavily freighted with departed souls  
To whom did spirits sing; but on that song  
Might none, albeit the meaning was right plain,  
Impose the harsh captivity of words.

Afterward waking, sweet was early air,  
Full excellent was morning : whether deep  
The snow lay keenly white, and shrouds of hail  
Blurred the grey breaker on a long foreshore,  
And swarming plover ran, and wild white mews  
And sea-pies printed with a thousand feet  
The fallen whiteness, making shrill the storm;  
Or whether, soothed of sunshine, throbbed and hummed  
The mill atween its bowering maple trees,  
And churned the leaping beck that reared, and urged  
A diamond-dripping wheel.

The happy find

Equality of beauty everywhere  
To feed on. All of shade and sheen is theirs,  
All the strange fashions and the fair wise ways  
Of lives beneath man's own. He breathes delight  
Whose soul is fresh, whose feet are wet with dew  
And the melted mist of morning, when at watch

Sunk deep in fern he marks the stealthy roe,  
Silent as sleep or shadow, cross the glade,  
Or dart athwart his view as August stars  
Shoot and are out—while gracefully pace on  
The wild-eyed harts to their traditional tree  
To clear the velvet from their budded horns.  
There is no want, both God and life are kind ;  
It is enough to hear, it is enough  
To see ; the pale wide barley-field they love,  
And its weird beauty, and the pale wide moon  
That lowering seems to lurk between the sheaves.  
So in the rustic hamlet at high noon  
The white owl sailing drowsed and deaf with sleep  
To hide her head in turrets browned of moss  
That is the rust of time. Ay so the pinks  
And mountain grass marked on a sharp sea-cliff  
While far below the northern diver feeds ;  
She having ended settling while she sits,  
As vessels water-logged that sink at sea  
And quietly into the deep go down.

It is enough to wake, it is enough  
To sleep :—With God and time he leaves the rest.  
But on a day death on the doorstep sits  
Waiting, or like a veiled woman walks  
Dogging his footsteps, or athwart his path  
The splendid passion-flower love unfolds  
Buds full of sorrow, not ordained to know

Appeasement through the answer of a sigh,  
The kiss of pity with denial given,  
The crown and blossom of accomplishment.  
Or haply comes the snake with subtlety,  
And tempts him with an apple to know all.

So,—Shut the gate ; the story tells itself  
Over and over ; Eden must be lost  
If after it be won. He stands at fault,  
Not knowing at all how this should be—he feels  
'The great bare barrenness o' the outside world.  
He thinks on Time and what it has to say ;  
He thinks on God, but God has changed His hand,  
Sitting afar. And as the moon draws on  
To cover the day-king in his eclipse,  
And thin the last fine sickle of light, till all  
Be gone, so fares it with his darkened soul.

The dark, but not Orion sparkling there  
With his best stars ; the dark, but not yet Eve.  
And now the wellsprings of sweet natural joy  
Lie, as the Genie sealed of Solomon,  
Fast prisoned in his heart ; he hath not learned  
The spell whereby to loose and set them forth,  
And all the glad delights that boyhood loved  
Smell at Oblivion's poppy, and lie still.

Ah ! they must sleep—' The mill can grind no more  
With water that hath passed.' Let it run on.

For he hath caught a whisper in the night ;  
This old inheritance in darkness given,  
The world, is widened, warmed, it is alive,  
Comes to his beating heart and bids it wake,  
Opens the door to youth, and bids it forth,  
Exultant for expansion and release,  
And bent to satisfy the mighty wish,  
Comfort and satisfy the mighty wish,  
Life of his life, the soul's immortal child  
That is to him as Eve.

He cannot win,  
Nor earn, nor see, nor hear, nor comprehend,  
With all the watch, tender, impetuous,  
That wastes him, this, whereof no less he feels  
Infinite things ; but yet the night is full  
Of air-beats and of heart-beats for her sake.  
Eve the aspirer, give her what she wants,  
Or wherefore was he born ?

O he was born  
To wish—then turn away :—to wish again  
And half forget his wish for earthlier joy ;  
He draws the net to land that brings red gold ;  
His dreams among the meshes tangled lie,  
And learning hath him at her feet ;—and love,  
The sea-born creature fresh from her sea foam,  
Touches the ruddiest veins in his young heart,  
Makes it to sob in him and sigh in him,  
Restless, repelled, dying, alive and keen,



Fainting away for the remorseless ALL  
Gone by, gone up, or sweetly gone before,  
But never in his arms. Then pity comes,  
Knocks at his breast, it may be, and comes in,  
Makes a wide wound that haply will not heal,  
But bleeds for poverty, and crime, and pain,  
Till for the dear kin's sake he grandly dares  
Or wastes him, with a wise improvidence ;  
But who can stir the weighty world ; or who  
Can drink a sea of tears ?

O love, and life,  
O world, and can it be that this is all?  
Leave him to tread expectance underfoot ;  
Let him alone to tame down his great hope  
Before it breaks his heart : ' Give me my share  
That I foresaw, my place, my draught of life.  
This that I bear, what is it ?—me no less  
It binds, I cannot disenslave my soul.'

There is but halting for the wearied foot.  
The better way is hidden ; faith hath failed—  
One stronger far than reason mastered her.  
It is not reason makes faith hard, but life.  
The husks of his dead creed, downtrod and dry,  
Are powerless now as some dishonoured spell,  
Some aged Pythia in her priestly clothes,  
Some widow'd witch divining by the dead.



Or if he keep one shrine undesecrate  
And go to it from time to time with tears,  
What lies there? A dead Christ enswathed and cold,  
A Christ that did not rise. The linen cloth  
Is wrapped about His head, He lies embalmed  
With myrrh and spices in His sepulchre,  
The love of God that daily dies;—to them  
That trust it the One Life, the all that lives.

O mother Eve, who wert beguiled of old,  
Thy blood is in thy children, thou art yet  
Their fate and copy; with thy milk they drew  
The immortal want of morning; but thy day  
Dawned and was over, and thy children know  
Contentment never, nor continuance long.  
For even thus it is with them: the day  
Waxeth, to wane anon, and a long night  
Leaves the dark heart unsatisfied with stars.

A soul in want and restless and bereft  
To whom all life hath lied, shall it too lie?  
Saying, 'I yield Thee thanks, most mighty God,  
Thou hast been pleased to make me thus and thus.  
I do submit me to Thy sovereign will  
That I full oft should hunger and not have,  
And vainly yearn after the perfect good,  
Gladness and peace'?

No, rather dare think thus :

‘ Ere chaos first had being, earth, or time,  
My Likeness was apparent in high heaven,  
Divine and manlike, and his dwelling place  
Was the bosom of the Father. By His hands  
Were the worlds made and filled with diverse growths  
And ordered lives. Then afterward they said,  
Taking strange counsel, as if he who worked  
Hitherto should not henceforth work alone,  
“ Let us make man ; ” and God did look upon  
That Divine Word which was the form of God,  
And it became a thought before the event.  
There they foresaw my face, foreheard my speech,  
God-like, God-loved, God-loving, God-derived.

And I was in a garden, and I fell  
Through envy of God’s evil son, but Love  
Would not be robbed of me for ever—Love  
For my sake passed into humanity,  
And there for my first Father won me home.  
How should I rest then? I have NOT gone home ;  
I feed on husks, and they given grudgingly,  
While my great Father—Father—O my God,  
What shall I do?’

Ay, I will dare think thus :

‘ I cannot rest because He doth not rest  
In whom I have my being. THIS IS GOD—  
My soul is conscious of His wondrous wish,

And my heart's hunger doth but answer His  
Whose thought has met with mine.

I have not all;

He moves me thus to take of Him what lacks.  
My want is God's desire to give,—He yearns  
To add Himself to life and so for aye  
Make it enough.'

A thought by night, a wish  
After the morning, and behold it dawns  
Pathetic in a still solemnity,  
And mighty words are said for him once more,  
'Let there be light.' Great heaven and earth have  
heard,  
And God comes down to him, and Christ doth rise.





*THE DREAMS THAT CAME TRUE.*

**I** SAW in a vision once, our mother-sphere  
The world, her fixed foredoomèd oval  
tracing,  
Rolling and rolling on and resting never,  
While like a phantom fell, behind her pacing  
The unfurled flag of night, her shadow drear  
Fled as she fled and hung to her for ever.

Great Heaven! methought, how strange a doom to  
share.

Would I may never bear  
Inevitable darkness after me  
(Darkness endow'd with drawings strong,  
And shadowy hands that cling unendingly),  
Nor feel that phantom-wings behind me sweep,  
As she feels night pursuing through the long  
Illimitable reaches of 'the vasty deep.'

God save you, gentlefolks. There was a man  
Who lay awake at midnight on his bed,  
Watching the spiral flame that feeding ran  
Among the logs upon his hearth, and shed  
A comfortable glow both warm and dim  
On crimson curtains that encompassed him.

Right stately was his chamber, soft and white  
The pillow, and his quilt was eider-down.  
What mattered it to him though all that night  
The desolate driving cloud might lower and frown,  
And winds were up the eddying sleet to chase,  
That drave and drave and found no settling-place?

What mattered it that leafless trees might rock,  
Or snow might drift athwart his window-pane?  
He bare a charmèd life against their shock,  
Secure from cold, hunger, and weather stain;  
Fixed in his right, and born to good estate,  
From common ills set by and separate.

From work and want and fear of want apart,  
This man (men called him Justice Wilvermore)—  
This man had comforted his cheerful heart  
With all that it desired from every shore.  
He had a right,—the right of gold is strong,—  
He stood upon his right his whole life long.

Custom makes all things easy, and content  
Is careless ; therefore on the storm and cold,  
As he lay waking, never a thought he spent,  
Albeit across the vale beneath the wold,  
Along a reedy mere that frozen lay,  
A range of sordid hovels stretched away.

What cause had he to think on them, forsooth ?  
What cause that night beyond another night ?  
He was familiar even from his youth  
With their long ruin and their evil plight.  
The wintry wind would search them like a scout.  
The water froze within as freely as without.

He think upon them ? No ! They were forlorn,  
So were the cowering inmates whom they held ;  
A thriftless tribe, to shifts and leanness born,  
Ever complaining : infancy or eld  
Alike. But there was rent, or long ago  
Those cottage roofs had met with overthrow.

For this they stood ; and what his thoughts might be  
That winter night, I know not ; but I know  
That, while the creeping flame fed silently  
And cast upon his bed a crimson glow,  
The Justice slept, and shortly in his sleep  
He fell to dreaming, and his dream was deep.

He dreamed that over him a shadow came ;  
And when he looked to find the cause, behold  
Some person knelt between him and the flame :—  
A cowering figure of one frail and old—  
A woman ; and she prayed, as he descried,  
And spread her feeble hands, and shook and sighed.

‘ Good Heaven ! ’ the Justice cried, and being distraught  
He called not to her, but he looked again :  
She wore a tattered cloak, but she had nought  
Upon her head ; and she did quake amain,  
And spread her wasted hands and poor attire  
To gather in the brightness of his fire.

‘ I know you, woman ! ’ then the Justice cried ;  
‘ I know that woman well,’ he cried aloud ;  
‘ The shepherd Aveland’s widow : God me guide !  
A pauper kneeling on my hearth : and bowed,  
The hag, like one at home, its warmth to share !  
How dares she to intrude ? What does she there ?

‘ Ho, woman, ho ! ’—but yet she did not stir,  
Though from her lips a fitful plaining broke ;  
‘ I’ll ring my people up to deal with her ;  
I’ll rouse the house,’ he cried ; but while he spoke  
He turned, and saw, but distant from his bed,  
Another form—a Darkness with a head.



Then, in a rage, he shouted 'Who are you?'  
For little in the gloom he might discern.  
'Speak out ; speak now ; or I will make you rue  
The hour !' but there was silence, and a stern,  
Dark face from out the dusk appeared to lean,  
And then again drew back, and was not seen.

'God !' cried the dreaming man, right impiously,  
'What have I done, that these my sleep affray ?'  
'God !' said the Phantom, 'I appeal to Thee,  
Appoint Thou me this man to be my prey.'  
'God !' sighed the kneeling woman, frail and old,  
'I pray Thee take me, for the world is cold.'

Then said the trembling Justice, in affright,  
'Fiend, I adjure thee, speak thine errand here !'  
And lo ! it pointed in the failing light  
Toward the woman, answering, cold and clear,  
'Thou art ordained an answer to thy prayer ;  
But first to tell *her* tale that kneeleth there.'

'*Her* tale !' the Justice cried. 'A pauper's tale !'  
And he took heart at this so low behest,  
And let the stoutness of his will prevail,  
Demanding, 'Is't for *her* you break my rest ?'  
She went to gaol of late for stealing wood,  
She will again for this night's hardihood.



‘ I sent her ; and to-morrow, as I live,  
I will commit her for this trespass here.’  
‘ Thou wilt not ! ’ quoth the shadow, ‘ thou wilt give  
Her story words ; ’ and then it stalked anear  
And showed a lowering face, and, dread to see,  
A countenance of angered majesty.

Then said the Justice, all his thoughts astray,  
With that material Darkness chiding him,  
‘ If this must be, then speak to her, I pray,  
And bid her move, for all the room is dim  
By reason of the place she holds to-night :  
She kneels between me and the warmth and light.’

‘ With adjurations deep and drawings strong,  
And with the power,’ it said, ‘ unto me given,  
I call upon thee, man, to tell thy wrong,  
Or look no more upon the face of Heaven.  
Speak ! though she kneel throughout the livelong night,  
And yet shall kneel between thee and the light.’

This when the Justice heard, he raised his hands,  
And held them as the dead in effigy  
Hold theirs, when carved upon a tomb. The bands  
Of fate had bound him fast : no remedy  
Was left : his voice unto himself was strange,  
And that unearthly vision did not change.

He said, 'That woman dwells anear my door,  
 Her life and mine began the selfsame day,  
 And I am hale and hearty : from my store  
 I never spared her aught : she takes her way  
 Of me unheeded ; pining, pinching care  
 Is all the portion that she has to share.

She is a broken-down, poor, friendless wight,  
 Through labour and through sorrow early old ;  
 And I have known of this her evil plight,  
 Her scanty earnings, and her lodgment cold ;  
 A patienter poor soul shall ne'er be found ;  
 She laboured on my land the long year round.

' What wouldst thou have me say, thou fiend abhorred ?  
 Show me no more thine awful visage grim.  
 If thou obey'st a greater, tell thy lord  
 That I have paid her wages. Cry to him !  
 He has not *much* against me. None can say  
 I have not paid her wages day by day.

' The spell ! It draws me. I must speak again ;  
 And speak against myself ; and speak aloud.  
 The woman once approached me to complain,—  
 " My wages are so low." I may be proud ;  
 It is a fault.' ' Ay,' quoth the Phantom fell,  
 Sinner ! it is a fault : thou sayest well.'

‘She made her moan, “My wages are so low.”’

‘Tell on!’ ‘She said,’ he answered, “My best days  
Are ended, and the summer is but slow  
To come; and my good strength for work decays  
By reason that I lived so hard, and lie  
On winter nights so bare for poverty.”’

‘And you replied—,’ began the lowering shade,  
‘And I replied,’ the Justice followed on,  
‘That wages like to mine my neighbour paid;  
And if I raised the wages of the one  
Straight should the others murmur; furthermore,  
The winter was as winters gone before,

‘No colder and not longer.’ ‘Afterward?—’  
The Phantom questioned. ‘Afterward,’ he groaned,  
‘She said my neighbour was a right good lord,  
Never a roof was broken that he owned;  
He gave much coal and clothing. “Doth he so?  
Work for my neighbour, then,” I answered. “Go!

“You are full welcome.” Then she mumbled out  
She hoped I was not angry; hoped, forsooth,  
I would forgive her: and I turned about,  
And said I should be angry in good truth  
If this should be again, or ever more  
She dared to stop me thus at the church door.’

‘Then?’ quoth the Shade ; and he, constrained, said on,  
 ‘Then she, reproved, curtseyed herself away.’  
 ‘Hast met her since?’ it made demand anon ;  
 And after pause the Justice answered, ‘Ay ;  
 Some wood was stolen ; my people made a stir ;  
 She was accused, and I did sentence her.’

But yet, and yet, the dreaded questions came :  
 ‘And didst thou weigh the matter—taking thought  
 Upon her sober life and honest fame?’  
 ‘I gave it,’ he replied, with gaze distraught ;  
 ‘I gave it, Fiend, the usual care ; I took  
 The usual pains ; I could not nearer look,

‘Because—because their pilfering had got head.  
 What wouldst thou more? The neighbours pleaded  
 hard,  
 ’T is true, and many tears the creature shed ;  
 But I had vowed their prayers to disregard,  
 Heavily strike the first that robbed my land,  
 And put down thieving with a steady hand.

‘She said she was not guilty. Ay, ’t is true  
 She said so, but the poor are liars all.  
 O thou fell Fiend, what wilt thou? Must I view  
 Thy darkness yet and must thy shadow fall  
 Upon me miserable? I have done  
 No worse, no more than many a scathless one.’

- ‘ Yet,’ quoth the Shade, ‘ if ever to thine ears  
The knowledge of her blamelessness was brought,  
Or others have confessed with dying tears  
The crime she suffered for, and thou hast wrought  
All reparation in thy power, and told  
Into her empty hand thy brightest gold :—
- ‘ If thou hast honoured her, and hast proclaimed  
Her innocence and thy deplorèd wrong,  
Still thou art nought ; for thou shalt yet be blamed  
In that she, feeble, came before thee strong,  
And thou, in cruel haste to deal a blow,  
Because thou hadst been angered, worked her woe.
- ‘ But didst thou right her? Speak !’ The Justice  
sighed,  
And beaded drops stood out upon his brow.  
‘ How could I humble me,’ forlorn he cried,  
‘ To a base beggar? Nay, I will avow  
That I did ill. I will reveal the whole ;  
I kept that knowledge in my secret soul.’
- ‘ Hear him !’ the Phantom muttered ; ‘ hear this man,  
O changeless God upon the judgment throne.’  
With that, cold tremors through his pulses ran,  
And lamentably he did make his moan ;  
While, with its arms upraised above his head,  
The dim dread visitor approached his bed.

‘Into these doors,’ it said, ‘which thou hast closed,  
Daily this woman shall from henceforth come ;  
Her kneeling form shall yet be interposed  
Till all thy wretched hours have told their sum ;  
Shall yet be interposed by day, by night,  
Between thee, sinner, and the warmth and light.

‘Remembrance of her want shall make thy meal  
Like ashes, and thy wrong thou shalt not right.  
But what ! Nay, verily, nor wealth nor weal  
From henceforth shall afford thy soul delight.  
Till men shall lay thy head beneath the sod,  
There shall be no deliverance, saith my God.’

‘Tell me thy name,’ the dreaming Justice cried ;  
‘By what appointment dost thou doom me thus ?  
’Tis well that thou shouldst know me,’ it replied,  
‘For mine thou art, and nought shall sever us ;  
From thine own lips and life I draw my force :  
The name thy nation give me is REMORSE.’

This when he heard, the dreaming man cried out,  
And woke affrighted ; and a crimson glow  
The dying ember shed. Within, without,  
In eddying rings the silence seemed to flow ;  
The wind had lulled, and on his forehead shone  
The last low gleam ; he was indeed alone.

'O, I have had a fearful dream,' said he ;  
    'I will take warning and for mercy trust ;  
The fiend Remorse shall never dwell with me :  
    I will repair that wrong, I will be just,  
I will be kind, I will my ways amend.'  
*Now the first dream is told unto its end.*

Anigh the frozen mere a cottage stood,  
    A piercing wind swept round and shook the door,  
The shrunken door, and easy way made good,  
    And drave long drifts of snow along the floor.  
It sparkled there like diamonds, for the moon  
Was shining in, and night was at the noon.

Before her dying embers, bent and pale,  
    A woman sat because her bed was cold ;  
She heard the wind, the driving sleet and hail,  
    And she was hunger-bitten, weak and old ;  
Yet while she cowered, and while the casement shook,  
Upon her trembling knees she held a book—

A comfortable book for them that mourn,  
    And good to raise the courage of the poor ;  
It lifts the veil and shows, beyond the bourne,  
    Their Elder Brother, from His home secure,  
That for them desolate He died to win,  
Repeating, 'Come, ye blessed, enter in.'



What thought she on, this woman? on her days  
Of toil, or on the supperless night forlorn?  
I think not so; the heart but seldom weighs  
With conscious care a burden always borne;  
And she was used to these things, had grown old  
In fellowship with toil, hunger, and cold.

Then did she think how sad it was to live  
Of all the good this world can yield bereft?  
No, her untutored thoughts she did not give  
To such a theme; but in their warp and weft  
She wove a prayer: then in the midnight deep  
Faintly and slow she fell away to sleep.

A strange, a marvellous sleep, which brought a dream,  
And it was this: that all at once she heard  
The pleasant babbling of a little stream  
That ran beside her door, and then a bird  
Broke out in songs. She looked, and lo! the rime  
And snow had melted; it was summer time!

And all the cold was over, and the mere  
Full sweetly swayed the flags and rushes green;  
The mellow sunlight poured right warm and clear  
Into her casement, and thereby were seen  
Fair honeysuckle flowers, and wandering bees  
Were hovering round the blossom-laden trees.



She said, I will betake me to my door,  
And will look out and see this wondrous sight,  
How summer is come back, and frost is o'er,  
And all the air warm waxen in a night.'  
With that she opened, but for fear she cried,  
For lo ! two Angels—one on either side.

And while she looked, with marvelling measureless,  
The Angels stood conversing face to face,  
But neither spoke to her. 'The wilderness—'  
One Angel said, 'the solitary place—  
Shall yet be glad for Him.' And then full fain  
The other Angel answered, 'He shall reign.'

And when the woman heard, in wondering wise,  
She whispered, 'They are speaking of my Lord.'  
And straightway swept across the open skies  
Multitudes like to these. They took the word,  
That flock of angels, 'He shall come again,  
My Lord, my Lord !' they sang, 'and He shall  
reign !'

Then they, drawn up into the blue o'erhead,  
Right happy, shining ones, made haste to flee ;  
And those before her one to other said,  
'Behold, He stands aneath yon almond tree.  
This when the woman heard, she fain had gazed,  
But paused for reverence, and bowed down amazed

After she looked, for this her dream was deep ;  
She looked, and there was nought beneath the tree ;  
Yet did her love and longing overleap  
The fear of Angels, awful though they be,  
And she passed out between the blessed things,  
And brushed her mortal weeds against their wings.

O, all the happy world was in its best,  
The trees were covered thick with buds and flowers,  
And these were dropping honey ; for the rest,  
Sweetly the birds were piping in their bowers ;  
Across the grass did groups of Angels go,  
And Saints in pairs were walking to and fro.

Then did she pass toward the almond tree,  
And none she saw beneath it : yet each Saint  
Upon his coming meekly bent the knee,  
And all their glory as they gazed waxed faint.  
And then a lighting Angel neared the place,  
And folded his fair wings before his face.

She also knelt, and spread her aged hands  
As feeling for the sacred human feet ;  
She said, ' Mine eyes are held, but if He stands  
Anear, I will not let Him hence retreat  
Except He bless me.' Then, O sweet ! O fair !  
Some words were spoken, but she knew not where.

She knew not if beneath the boughs they woke,  
Or dropt upon her from the realms above ;  
'What wilt thou, woman?' in the dream He spoke,  
'Thy sorrow moveth Me, thyself I love ;  
Long have I counted up thy mournful years,  
Once I did weep to wipe away thy tears.'

She said : 'My one Redeemer, only blest,  
I know Thy voice, and from my yearning heart  
Draw out my deep desire, my great request,  
My prayer, that I might enter where Thou art.  
Call me, O call from this world troublesome,  
And let me see Thy face.' He answered, 'Come.'

*Here is the ending of the second dream.*

It is a frosty morning, keen and cold,  
Fast locked are silent mere and frozen stream,  
And snow lies sparkling on the desert wold ;  
With savoury morning meats they spread the board,  
But Justice Wilvermore will walk abroad.

'Bring me my cloak,' quoth he, as one in haste.  
'Before you breakfast, sir?' his man replies.  
'Ay,' quoth he quickly, and he will not taste  
Of aught before him, but in urgent wise  
As he would fain some carking care allay,  
Across the frozen field he takes his way.

‘A dream ! how strange that it should move me so,  
’T was but a dream,’ quoth Justice Wilvermore :  
‘And yet I cannot peace nor pleasure know,  
For wrongs I have not heeded heretofore ;  
Silver and gear the crone shall have of me,  
And dwell for life in yonder cottage free.

‘For visions of the night are fearful things,  
Remorse is dread, though merely in a dream ;  
I will not subject me to visitings  
Of such a sort again. I will esteem  
My peace above my pride. From natures rude  
A little gold will buy me gratitude.

The woman shall have leave to gather wood,  
As much as she may need, the long year round ;  
She shall, I say—moreover, it were good  
Yon other cottage roofs to render sound.  
Thus to my soul the ancient peace restore,  
And sleep at ease,’ quoth Justice Wilvermore.

With that he nears the door : a frosty rime  
Is branching over it, and drifts are deep  
Against the wall. He knocks, and there is time--  
(For none doth open)—time to list the sweep  
And whistle of the wind along the mere  
Through beds of stiffened reeds and rushes sere

‘ If she be out, I have my pains for nought,’  
He saith, and knocks again, and yet once more,  
But to his ear nor step nor stir is brought ;  
And after pause, he doth unlatch the door  
And enter. No : she is not out, for see  
She sits asleep ’mid frost-work winterly.

Asleep, asleep before her empty grate,  
Asleep, asleep, albeit the landlord call.  
‘ What, dame,’ he saith, and comes toward her straight,  
‘ Asleep so early !’ But whate’er befall,  
She sleepeth ; then he nears her, and behold  
He lays a hand on hers, and it is cold.

Then doth the Justice to his home return ;  
From that day forth he wears a sadder brow :  
His hands are opened, and his heart doth learn  
The patience of the poor. He made a vow  
And keeps it, for the old and sick have shared  
His gifts, their sordid homes he hath repaired.

And some he hath made happy, but for him  
Is happiness no more. He doth repent,  
And now the light of joy is waxen dim,  
Are all his hopes toward the Highest sent,  
He looks for mercy, and he waits release  
Above, for this world doth not yield him peace.

Night after night, night after desolate night,  
 Day after day, day after tedious day,  
 Stands by his fire, and dulls its gleamy light,  
 Paceth behind or meets him in the way ;  
 Or shares the path by hedgerow, mere, or stream,  
 The visitor that doomed him in his dream.

---

Thy kingdom come.

I heard a Seer cry—‘ The wilderness,  
 The solitary place,  
 Shall yet be glad for Him, and He shall bless  
 (Thy kingdom come !) with His revealèd face  
 The forests ; they shall drop their precious gum,  
 And shed for Him their balm : and He shall yield  
 The grandeur of His speech to charm the field.

‘ Then all the soothèd winds shall drop to listen,  
 (Thy kingdom come !),  
 Comforted waters waxen calm shall glisten  
 With bashful tremblement beneath His smile ;  
 And Echo ever the while  
 Shall take, and in her awful joy repeat,  
 The laughter of His lips—(Thy kingdom come) :  
 And hills that sit apart shall be no longer dumb ;  
 No, they shall shout and shout,  
 Raining their lovely loyalty along the dewy plain :  
 And valleys round about,

‘ And all the well-contented land, made sweet  
    With flowers she opened at His feet,  
Shall answer ; shout and make the welkin ring  
And tell it to the stars, shout, shout, and sing ;  
    Her cup being full to the brim,  
    Her poverty made rich with Him,  
Her yearning satisfied to its utmost sum—  
Lift up thy voice, O earth, prepare thy song,  
    It shall not yet be long,  
Lift up, O earth, for He shall come again,  
Thy Lord ; and He shall reign, and He SHALL reign—  
    Thy kingdom come.’







*SONGS ON THE VOICES OF BIRDS.*

INTRODUCTION.

CHILD AND BOATMAN.

- M**ARTIN, I wonder who makes all the  
songs.’  
‘You do, sir?’  
‘Yes, I wonder how they come.’  
‘Well, boy, I wonder what you’ll wonder next!’  
‘But somebody must make them?’  
‘Sure enough.’  
‘Does your wife know?’  
‘She never said she did.’  
‘You told me that she knew so many things.’  
‘I said she was a London woman, sir,  
And a fine scholar, but I never said  
She knew about the songs.’  
‘I wish she did.’  
‘And I wish no such thing; she knows enough,  
She knows too much already. Look you now,



This vessel 's off the stocks, a tidy craft.'

'A schooner, Martin?'

'No, boy, no; a brig

Only she 's schooner-rigged—a lovely craft.'

'Is she for me? O, thank you, Martin dear.

What shall I call her?'

'Well, sir, what you please.'

'Then write on her "The Eagle."'

'Bless the child!

Eagle! why, you know nought of eagles, you.

When we lay off the coast, up Canada way,

And chanced to be ashore when twilight fell,

That was the place for eagles; bald they were,

With eyes as yellow as gold.'

'O, Martin dear,

Tell me about them.'

'Tell! there 's nought to tell,

Only they snored o' nights and frightened us.'

'Snored?'

'Ay, I tell you, snored; they slept upright

In the great oaks by scores; as true as time,

If I'd had aught upon my mind just then,

I would n't have walked that wood for unknown gold;

It was most awful. When the moon was full,

I've seen them fish at night, in the middle watch,

When she got low. I've seen them plunge like

stones,

And come up fighting with a fish as long,

Ay, longer than my arm ; and they would sail—  
 When they had struck its life out—they would sail  
 Over the deck, and show their fell, fierce eyes,  
 And croon for pleasure, hug the prey, and speed  
 Grand as a frigate on a wind.'

' My ship,  
 She must be called " The Eagle " after these.  
 Martin, you 'll ask your wife about the songs  
 When you go in at dinner-time ?'

' Not I.'

---

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE UNSATISFIED  
 HEART.

WHEN in a May-day hush  
 Chanteth the Missel-thrush,  
 The harp o' the heart makes answer with murmurous  
 stirs ;  
 When Robin-redbreast sings,  
 We think on budding springs,  
 And Culvers when they coo are love's remembrancers.

But thou in the trance of light  
 Stayest the feeding night,  
 And Echo makes sweet her lips with the utterance  
 wise,

And casts at our glad feet,  
In a wisp of fancies fleet,  
Life's fair, life's unfulfilled, impassioned prophecies.

Her central thought full well  
Thou hast the wit to tell,  
To take the sense o' the dark and to yield it so ;  
The moral of moon light  
To set in a cadence bright,  
And sing our loftiest dream that we thought none did  
know.

I have no nest as thou,  
Bird on the blossoming bough,  
Yet over thy tongue outfloweth the song o' my soul,  
Chanting, 'Forego thy strife,  
The spirit out-acts the life,  
But much is seldom theirs who can perceive the  
whole.

'Thou drawest a perfect lot  
All thine, but holden not,  
Lie low, at the feet of beauty that ever shall bide ;  
There might be sorer smart  
Than thine, far-seeing heart,  
Whose fate is still to yearn, and not be satisfied.'

## SAND MARTINS.

I PASSED an inland-cliff precipitate ;  
 From tiny caves peeped many a soot-black poll ;  
 In each a mother-martin sat elate,  
 And of the news delivered her small soul.

Fantastic chatter ! hasty, glad, and gay,  
 Whereof the meaning was not ill to tell :  
 ‘ Gossip, how wags the world with you to-day ? ’  
 ‘ Gossip, the world wags well, the world wags well.’

And heark’ning, I was sure their little ones  
 Were in the bird-talk, and discourse was made  
 Concerning hot sea-bights and tropic suns,  
 For a clear sultriness the tune conveyed ;—

And visions of the sky as of a cup  
 Hailing down light on pagan Pharaoh’s sand,  
 And quivering air-waves trembling up and up,  
 And blank stone faces marvellously bland.

‘ When should the young be fledged and with them hie  
 Where costly day drops down in crimson light ?  
 (Fortunate countries of the fire-fly  
 Swarm with blue diamonds all the sultry night,

- ‘ And the immortal moon takes turn with them).  
When should they pass again by that red land,  
Where lovely mirage works a broidered hem  
To fringe with phantom-palms a robe of sand?
- ‘ When should they dip their breasts again and play  
In slumberous azure pools clear as the air,  
Where rosy-winged flamingos fish all day,  
Stalking amid the lotus blossom fair?
- ‘ Then, over podded tamarinds bear their flight,  
While cassias blossom in the zone of calms,  
And so betake them to a south sea-bight  
To gossip in the crowns of cocoa-palms
- ‘ Whose roots are in the spray. O, haply there  
Some dawn, white-wingèd they might chance to find  
A frigate standing in to make more fair  
The loneliness unaltered of mankind.
- ‘ A frigate come to water : nuts would fall,  
And nimble feet would climb the flower-flushed strand,  
While northern talk would ring, and therewithal  
The martins would desire the cool north land.
- ‘ And all would be as it had been before ;  
Again at eve there would be news to tell ;  
Who passed should hear them chant it o’er and o’er,  
“ Gossip, how wags the world?” “ Well, gossip, well.”

A POET IN HIS YOUTH, AND THE  
CUCKOO-BIRD.

ONCE upon a time, I lay  
Fast asleep at dawn of day ;  
Windows open to the south,  
Fancy pouting her sweet mouth  
To my ear.

                        She turned a globe  
In her slender hand, her robe  
Was all spangled ; and she said,  
As she sat at my bed's head,  
' Poet, poet, what, asleep !  
Look ! the ray runs up the steep  
To your roof.' Then in the golden  
Essence of romances olden,  
Bathed she my entrancèd heart.  
And she gave a hand to me,  
Drew me onward, ' Come ! ' said she ;  
And she moved with me apart,  
Down the lovely vale of Leisure.

Such its name was, I heard say,  
For some Fairies trooped that way ;  
Common people of the place,  
Taking their accustomed pleasure,  
(All the clocks being stopped) to race

Down the slope on palfreys fleet.  
Bridle bells made tinkling sweet ;  
And they said, ' What signified  
Faring home till eventide :  
There were pies on every shelf,  
And the bread would bake itself.'  
But for that I cared not, fed,  
As it were, with angels' bread,  
Sweet as honey ; yet next day  
All foredoomed to melt away ;  
Gone before the sun waxed hot,  
Melted manna that *was not*.

Rock-doves' poetry of plaint,  
Or the starling's courtship quaint,  
Heart made much of ; 'twas a boon  
Won from silence, and too soon  
Wasted in the ample air :  
Building rooks far distant were.  
Scarce at all would speak the rills,  
And I saw the idle hills,  
In their amber hazes deep,  
Fold themselves and go to sleep,  
Though it was not yet high noon.

Silence? Rather music brought  
From the spheres ! As if a thought,

Having taken wings, did fly  
Through the reaches of the sky.  
Silence? No, a sumptuous sigh  
That had found embodiment,  
That had come across the deep  
After months of wintry sleep,  
And with tender heavings went  
Floating up the firmament.

‘O,’ I mourned, half slumbering yet,  
‘’Tis the voice of *my* regret—  
*Mine!*’ and I awoke. Full sweet  
Saffron sunbeams did me greet;  
And the voice it spake again,  
Dropped from yon blue cup of light  
Or some cloudlet swan’s-down white  
On my soul, that drank full fain  
The sharp joy—the sweet pain—  
Of its clear, right innocent,  
Unreprovèd discontent.

How it came—where it went—  
Who can tell? The open blue  
Quivered with it, and I, too,  
Trembled. I remembered me  
Of the springs that used to be,  
When a dimpled white-haired child,  
Shy and tender and half wild,



In the meadows I had heard  
Some way off the talking bird,  
And had felt it marvellous sweet,  
For it laughed : it did me greet,  
Calling me : yet, hid away  
In the woods, it would not play.  
No.

And all the world about,  
While a man will work or sing,  
Or a child pluck flowers of spring,  
Thou wilt scatter music out,  
Rouse him with thy wandering note,  
Changeful fancies set afloat,  
Almost tell with thy clear throat,  
But not quite—the wonder-rife,  
Most sweet riddle, dark and dim,  
That he searcheth all his life,  
Searcheth yet, and ne'er expoundeth ;  
And so winnowing of thy wings,  
Touch and trouble his heart's strings,  
That a certain music soundeth  
In that wondrous instrument,  
With a trembling upward sent,  
That is reckoned sweet above  
By the Greatness surnamed Love.

‘O, I hear thee in the blue ;  
Would that I might wing it too !

O to have what hope hath seen !

O to be what might have been !

‘O to set my life, sweet bird,  
To a tune that oft I heard  
When I used to stand alone  
Listening to the lovely moan  
Of the swaying pines o’erhead,  
While, a-gathering of bee-bread  
For their living, murmured round,  
As the pollen dropped to ground,  
All the nations from the hives ;  
And the little brooding wives  
On each nest, brown dusky things,  
Sat with gold-dust on their wings.  
Then beyond (more sweet than all)  
Talked the tumbling waterfall ;  
And there were, and there were not  
(As might fall, and form anew  
Bell-hung drops of honey-dew)  
Echoes of—I know not what ;  
As if some right-joyous elf,  
While about his own affairs,  
Whistled softly otherwheres,  
Nay, as if our mother dear,  
Wrapped in sun-warm atmosphere,  
Laughed a little to herself,  
Laughed a little as she rolled,  
Thinking on the days of old.

‘ Ah ! there be some hearts, I wis,  
To which nothing comes amiss.  
Mine was one. Much secret wealth  
I was heir to : and by stealth,  
When the moon was fully grown,  
And she thought herself alone,  
I have heard her, ay, right well,  
Shoot a silver message down  
To the unseen sentinel  
Of a still, snow-thatchèd town.

‘ Once, awhile ago, I peered  
In the nest where Spring was reared.  
There, she, quivering her fair wings,  
Flattered March with chirrupings ;  
And they fed her ; nights and days  
Fed her mouth with much sweet food,  
And her heart with love and praise,  
Till the wild thing rose and flew  
Over woods and water-springs,  
Shaking off the morning dew  
In a rainbow from her wings.

‘ Once (I will to you confide  
More), O once in forest wide,  
I, benighted, overheard  
Marvellous mild echoes stirred,  
And a calling half defined,

And an answering from afar ;  
Somewhat talkèd with a star,  
And the talk was of mankind.

“Cuckoo, cuckoo !”

Float anear in upper blue :  
Art thou yet a prophet true ?  
Wilt thou say, “ And having seen  
Things that be, and have not been,  
Thou art free o’ the world, for nought  
Can despoil thee of thy thought ” ?  
Nay, but make me music yet,  
Bird, as deep as my regret,  
For a certain hope hath set,  
Like a star ; and left me heir  
To a crying for its light,  
An aspiring infinite,  
And a beautiful despair !

‘ Ah ! no more, no more, no more  
I shall lie at thy shut door,  
Mine ideal, my desired,  
Dreaming thou wilt open it,  
And step out, thou most admired,  
By my side to fare, or sit,  
Quenching hunger and all drouth  
With the wit of thy fair mouth,

Showing me the wishèd prize  
In the calm of thy dove's eyes,  
Teaching me the wonder-rife  
Majesties of human life,  
All its fairest possible sum,  
And the grace of its to come.

'What a difference ! Why of late  
All sweet music used to say,  
"She will come, and with thee stay  
To-morrow, man, if not to-day."  
Now it murmurs, "Wait, wait, wait !"'

---

A RAVEN IN A WHITE CHINE.

I SAW when I looked up, on either hand,  
A pale high chalk-cliff, reared aloft in white ;  
A narrowing rent soon closed toward the land—  
Toward the sea, an open yawning bight.

The polished tide, with scarce a hint of blue,  
Washed in the bight ; above with angry moan  
A raven, that was robbed, sat up in view,  
Croaking and crying on a ledge alone.

'Stand on thy nest, spread out thy fateful wings,  
With sullen hungry love bemoan thy brood,  
For boys have wrung their necks, those imp-like things,  
Whose beaks dripped crimson daily at their food.

'Cry, thou black prophetess ! cry, and despair,  
None love thee, none ! Their father was thy foe,  
Whose father in his youth did know thy lair,  
And steal thy little demons long ago.

'Thou madest many childless for their sake;  
And picked out many eyes that loved the light.  
Cry, thou black prophetess ! sit up, awake,  
Forebode ; and ban them through the desolate night.'

Lo ! while I spake it, with a crimson hue  
The dipping sun endowed that silver flood,  
And all the cliffs flushed red, and up she flew,  
The bird, as mad to bathe in airy blood.

'Nay, thou may'st cry, the omen is not thine,  
Thou aged priestess of fell doom, and fate.  
It is not blood : thy gods are making wine,  
They spilt the must outside their city gate,

'And stained their azure pavement with the lees :  
They will not listen though thou cry aloud.  
Old Chance, thy dame, sits mumbling at her ease,  
Nor hears ; the fair hag, Luck, is in her shroud.

'They heed not, they withdraw the sky-hung sign :  
Thou hast no charm against the favourite race ;  
Thy gods pour out for it, not blood, but wine :  
There is no justice in their dwelling-place !

‘ Safe in their father’s house the boys shall rest,  
Though thy fell brood doth stark and silent lie ;  
Their unborn sons may yet despoil thy nest :  
Cry, thou black prophetess ! lift up ! cry, cry.’

---

## THE WARBLING OF BLACKBIRDS.

WHEN I hear the waters fretting,  
When I see the chestnut letting  
All her lovely blossom falter down, I think, ‘ Alas the  
day !’  
Once with magical sweet singing,  
Blackbirds set the woodland ringing,  
That awakes no more while April hours wear themselves  
away.

In our hearts fair hope lay smiling,  
Sweet as air, and all beguiling ;  
And there hung a mist of bluebells on the slope and  
down the dell ;  
And we talked of joy and splendour  
That the years unborn would render,  
And the blackbirds helped us with the story, for they  
knew it well.

Piping, fluting, ‘ Bees are humming,  
April ’s here, and summer ’s coming ;

Don't forget us when you walk, a man with men, in  
 pride and joy ;  
 Think on us in alleys shady,  
 When you step a graceful lady ;  
 For no fairer day have we to hope for, little girl and boy.

' Laugh and play, O lisp'ing waters,  
 Lull our downy sons and daughters ;  
 Come, O wind, and rock their leafy cradle in thy  
 wanderings coy ;  
 When they wake we 'll end the measure  
 With a wild sweet cry of pleasure,  
 And a " Hey down derry, let 's be merry ! little girl and  
 boy ! " '

---

SEA-MEWS IN WINTER TIME.

I WALKED beside a dark grey sea,  
 And said, 'O world, how cold thou art !  
 Thou poor white world, I pity thee,  
 For joy and warmth from thee depart.

' Yon rising wave licks off the snow,  
 Winds on the crag each other chase,  
 In little powdery whirls they blow  
 The misty fragments down its face.



'The sea is cold, and dark its rim,  
    Winter sits cowering on the wold,  
And I beside this watery brim,  
    Am also lonely, also cold.'

I spoke, and drew toward a rock,  
    Where many mews made twittering sweet ;  
Their wings upreared, the clustering flock  
    Did pat the sea-grass with their feet.

A rock but half submerged, the sea  
    Ran up and washed it while they fed ;  
Their fond and foolish ecstasy  
    A wondering in my fancy bred.

Joy companied with every cry,  
    Joy in their food, in that keen wind,  
That heaving sea, that shaded sky,  
    And in themselves, and in their kind.

The phantoms of the deep at play !  
    What idless graced the twittering things ;  
Luxurious paddlings in the spray,  
    And delicate lifting up of wings.

Then all at once a flight, and fast  
    The lovely crowd flew out to sea ;  
If mine own life had been recast,  
    Earth had not looked more changed to me.

‘Where is the cold? Yon clouded skies  
Have only dropt their curtains low  
To shade the old mother where she lies  
Sleeping a little, ’neath the snow.

‘The cold is not in crag, nor scar,  
Not in the snows that lap the lea,  
Not in yon wings that beat afar,  
Delighting, on the crested sea ;

‘No, nor in yon exultant wind  
That shakes the oak and bends the pine.  
Look near, look in, and thou shalt find  
No sense of cold, fond fool, but thine !’

With that I felt the gloom depart,  
And thoughts within me did unfold,  
Whose sunshine warmed me to the heart—  
I walked in joy, and was not cold.





*LAURENCE.*

I

**H**E knew she did not love him ; but so long  
As rivals were unknown to him, he dwelt  
At ease, and did not find his love a pain.

He had much deference in his nature, need  
To honour—it became him ; he was frank,  
Fresh, hardy, of a joyous mind, and strong—  
Looked all things straight in the face. So when she came  
Before him first, he looked at her, and looked  
No more, but coloured to his healthful brow,  
And wished himself a better man, and thought  
On certain things, and wished they were undone,  
Because her girlish innocence, the grace  
Of her unblemished pureness, wrought in him  
A longing and aspiring, and a shame  
To think how wicked was the world—that world  
Which he must walk in—while from her (and such  
As she was) it was hidden ; there was made  
A clean path, and the girl moved on like one  
In some enchanted ring.

Y

In his young heart  
She reigned, with all the beauties that she had,  
And all the virtues that he rightly took  
For granted ; there he set her with her crown,  
And at her first enthronement he turned out  
Much that was best away, for unaware  
His thoughts grew noble. She was always there  
And knew it not, and he grew like to her  
And like to what he thought her.

Now he dwelt  
With kin that loved him well—two fine old folk,  
A rich, right honest yeoman, and his dame—  
Their only grandson he, their pride, their heir.

To these, one daughter had been born, one child,  
And as she grew to woman, ‘Look,’ they said,  
‘She must not leave us ; let us build a wing,  
With cheerful rooms and wide, to our old grange ;  
There may she dwell, with her good man, and all  
God sends them.’ Then the girl in her first youth  
Married a curate—handsome, poor in purse,  
Of gentle blood and manners, and he lived  
Under her father’s roof as they had planned.

Full soon, for happy years are short, they filled  
The house with children ; four were born to them.  
Then came a sickly season ; fever spread

Among the poor. The curate, never slack  
In duty, praying by the sick, or worse,  
Burying the dead, when all the air was clogged  
With poisonous mist, was stricken ; long he lay  
Sick, almost to the death, and when his head  
He lifted from the pillow, there was left  
One only of that pretty flock : his girls,  
His three, were cold beneath the sod ; his boy,  
Their eldest born, remained.

The drooping wife

Bore her great sorrow in such quiet wise,  
That first they marvelled at her, then they tried  
To rouse her, showing her their bitter grief,  
Lamenting, and not sparing ; but she sighed,  
' Let me alone, it will not be for long.'  
Then did her mother tremble, murmuring out,  
' Dear child, the best of comfort will be soon.  
O, when you see this other little face,  
You will, please God, be comforted.'

She said,

' I shall not live to see it ;' but she did—  
A little sickly face, a wan, thin face.  
Then she grew eager, and her eyes were bright  
When she would plead with them, ' Take me away,  
Let me go south ; it is the bitter blast  
That chills my tender babe ; she cannot thrive  
Under the desolate, dull, mournful cloud.'  
Then all they journeyed south together, mute

With past and coming sorrow, till the sun,  
In gardens edging the blue tideless main,  
Warmed them and calmed the aching at their hearts,  
And all went better for a while ; but not  
For long. They sitting by the orange trees  
Once rested, and the wife was very still :  
A woman with narcissus flowers heaped up  
Let down her basket from her head, but paused  
With pitying gesture, and drew near and stooped,  
Taking a white wild face upon her breast—  
The little babe on its poor mother's knees,  
None marking it, none knowing else, had died.

The fading mother could not stay behind,  
Her heart was broken ; but it awed them most  
To feel they must not, dared not, pray for life,  
Seeing she longed to go, and went so gladly.

After, these three, who loved each other well,  
Brought their one child away, and they were best  
Together in the wide old grange. Full oft  
The father with the mother talked of her,  
Their daughter, but the husband never more ;  
He looked for solace in his work, and gave  
His mind to teach his boy. And time went on,  
Until the grandsire prayed those other two  
' Now part with him ; it must be ; for his good :  
He rules and knows it ; choose for him a school,

Let him have all advantages, and all  
Good training that should make a gentleman.'

With that they parted from their boy, and lived  
Longing between his holidays, and time  
Sped ; he grew on till he had eighteen years.  
His father loved him, wished to make of him  
Another parson ; but the farmer's wife  
Murmured at that—' No, no, they learned bad ways,  
They ran in debt at college ; she had heard  
That many rued the day they sent their boys  
To college ; ' and between the two broke in  
His grandsire, ' Find a sober, honest man,  
A scholar, for our lad should see the world  
While he is young, that he may marry young.  
He will not settle and be satisfied  
Till he has run about the world awhile.  
Good lack, I longed to travel in my youth,  
And had no chance to do it. Send him off,  
A sober man being found to trust him with,  
One with the fear of God before his eyes.'  
And he prevailed ; the careful father chose  
A tutor, young—the worthy matron thought—  
In truth, not ten years older than her boy,  
And glad as he to range, and keen for snows,  
Desert, and ocean. And they made strange choice  
Of where to go, left the sweet day behind,  
And pushed up north in whaling ships, to feel



What cold was, see the blowing whale come up,  
And Arctic creatures, while a scarlet sun  
Went round and round, crowd on the clear blue berg.

Then did the trappers have them ; and they heard  
Nightly the whistling calls of forest-men  
That mocked the forest wonners ; and they saw  
Over the open, raging up like doom,  
The dangerous dust-cloud, that was full of eyes—  
The bisons. So were three years gone like one ;  
And the old cities drew them for a while,  
Great mothers, by the Tiber and the Seine ;  
They have hid many sons hard by their seats,  
But all the air is stirring with them still,  
The waters murmur of them, skies at eve  
Are stained with their rich blood, and every sound  
Means men.

At last, the fourth year running out,  
The youth came home. And all the cheerful house  
Was decked in fresher colours, and the dame  
Was full of joy. But in the father's heart  
Abode a painful doubt. ' It is not well ;  
He cannot spend his life with dog and gun.  
I do not care that my one son should sleep  
Merely for keeping him in health, and wake  
Only to ride to cover.'

Not the less  
The grandsire ponder'd. ' Ay, the boy must work



Or spend ; and I must let him spend ; just stay  
Awhile with us, and then from time to time  
Have leave to be away with those fine folk  
With whom, these many years, at school, and now,  
During his sojourn in the foreign towns,  
He has been made familiar.' Thus a month  
Went by. They liked the stirring ways of youth,  
The quick elastic step, and joyous mind,  
Ever expectant of it knew not what,  
But something higher than has e'er been born  
Of easy slumber and sweet competence.  
And as for him—the while they thought and thought  
A comfortable instinct let him know  
How they had waited for him, to complete  
And give a meaning to their lives ; and still  
At home, but with a sense of newness there,  
And frank and fresh as in the schoolboy days,  
He oft—invading of his father's haunts,  
The study where he passed the silent morn--  
Would sit, devouring with a greedy joy  
The piled-up books, uncut as yet ; or wake  
To guide with him by night the tube, and search,  
Ay, think to find new stars ; then, risen betimes,  
Would ride about the farm, and list the talk  
Of his hale grandsire.

But a day came round,  
When, after peering in his mother's room,  
Shaded and shuttered from the light, he oped

A door, and found the rosy grandmother  
 Ensconced and happy in her special pride,  
 Her store-room. She was corking syrups rare,  
 And fruits all sparkling in a crystal coat.  
 Here, after choice of certain cates well known,  
 He, sitting on her bacon-chest at ease,  
 Sang as he watched her, till right suddenly,  
 As if a new thought came, 'Goody,' quoth he,  
 'What, think you, do they want to do with me?  
 What have they planned for me that I should do?'

'Do, laddie!' quoth she, faltering, half in tears;  
 'Are you not happy with us, not content?  
 Why would ye go away? There is no need  
 That ye should do at all. O, bide at home.  
 Have we not plenty?'

'Even so,' he said;

'I did not wish to go.'

'Nay, then,' quoth she,

'Be idle; let me see your blessed face.  
 What, is the horse your father chose for you  
 Not to your mind? He is? Well, well, remain;  
 Do as you will, so you but do it here.  
 You shall not want for money.'

But, his arms

Folding, he sat and twisted up his mouth  
 With comical discomfiture.

'What, then,'

She sighed, 'what is it, child, that you would like?'  
'Why,' said he, 'farming.'

And she looked at him,  
Fond, foolish woman that she was, to find  
Some fitness in the worker for the work,  
And she found none. A certain grace there was  
Of movement, and a beauty in the face,  
Sun-browned and healthful beauty that had come  
From his grave father; and she thought, 'Good lack,  
A farmer! he is fitter for a duke.  
He walks; why, how he walks! if I should meet  
One like him, whom I knew not, I should ask,  
"And who may that be?"' So the foolish thought  
Found words. Quoth she, half laughing, half ashamed,  
'We planned to make of you—a gentleman.'  
And with engaging sweet audacity—  
She thought it nothing less,—he, looking up,  
With a smile in his blue eyes, replied to her,  
'And hav'n't you done it?' Quoth she, lovingly,  
'I think we have, laddie; I think we have.'

'Then,' quoth he, 'I may do what best I like;  
It makes no matter. Goody, you were wise  
To help me in it, and to let me farm;  
I think of getting into mischief else!'  
'No! do ye, laddie?' quoth the dame, and laughed.  
'But ask my grandfather,' the youth went on,  
'To let me have the farm he bought last year,

The little one, to manage. I like land ;  
I want some.' And she, womanlike, gave way  
Convinced ; and promised, and made good her word,  
And that same night upon the matter spoke,  
In presence of the father and the son.

' Roger,' quoth she, ' our Laurence wants to farm :  
I think he might do worse.' The father sat  
Mute but right glad. The grandson breaking in  
Set all his wish and his ambition forth ;  
But cunningly the old man hid his joy,  
And made conditions with a faint demur.  
Then pausing, ' Let your father speak,' quoth he ;  
' I am content if he is : ' at his word  
The parson took him, ay, and, parson like,  
Put a religious meaning in the work,  
Man's earliest work, and wished his son God speed.

## II

Thus all were satisfied, and day by day,  
For two sweet years a happy course was theirs ;  
Happy, but yet the fortunate, the young  
Loved, and much cared-for, entered on his strife—  
A stirring of the heart, a quickening keen  
Of sight and hearing to the delicate  
Beauty and music of an altered world ;  
Began to walk in that mysterious light

Which doth reveal and yet transform ; which gives  
Destiny, sorrow, youth, and death, and life,  
Intenser meaning ; in disquieting  
Lifts up ; a shining light : men call it Love.

Fair, modest eyes had she, the girl he loved ;  
A silent creature, thoughtful, grave, sincere.  
She never turned from him with sweet caprice,  
Nor changing moved his soul to troublous hope,  
Nor dropped for him her heavy lashes low,  
But excellent in youthful grace came up ;  
And ere his words were ready, passing on,  
Had left him all a-tremble ; yet made sure  
That by her own true will, and fixed intent,  
She held him thus remote. Therefore, albeit  
He knew she did not love him, yet so long  
As of a rival unaware, he dwelt  
All in the present, without fear, or hope,  
Enthralled and whelmed in the deep sea of love,  
And could not get his head above its wave  
To search the far horizon, or to mark  
Whereto it drifted him.

So long, so long ;  
Then, on a sudden, came the ruthless fate,  
Showed him a bitter truth, and brought him bale  
All in the tolling out of noon.

'T was thus :  
Snow-time was come ; it had been snowing hard ;

Across the churchyard path he walked ; the clock  
Began to strike, and, as he passed the porch,  
Half turning, through a sense that came to him  
As of some presence in it, he beheld  
His love, and she had come for shelter there ;  
And all her face was fair with rosy bloom,  
The blush of happiness ; and one held up  
Her ungloved hand in both his own, and stooped  
Toward it, sitting by her. O her eyes  
Were full of peace and tender light : they looked  
One moment in the ungraced lover's face  
While he was passing in the snow ; and he  
Received the story, while he raised his hat  
Retiring. Then the clock left off to strike,  
And that was all. It snowed, and he walked on ;  
And in a certain way he marked the snow,  
And walked, and came upon the open heath ;  
And in a certain way he marked the cold,  
And walked as one that had no starting-place  
Might walk, but not to any certain goal.

And he strode on toward a hollow part,  
Where from the hillside gravel had been dug,  
And he was conscious of a cry, and went  
Dulled in his sense, as though he heard it not ;  
Till a small farmhouse drudge, a half-grown girl,  
Rose from the shelter of a drift that lay

Against the bushes, crying, 'God ! O God,  
O my good God, He sends us help at last.'

Then looking hard upon her, came to him  
The power to feel and to perceive. Her teeth  
Chattered, and all her limbs with shuddering failed,  
And in her threadbare shawl was wrapped a child  
That looked on him with wondering, wistful eyes.

'I thought to freeze,' the girl broke out with tears ;  
'Kind sir, kind sir,' and she held out the child,  
As praying him to take it ; and he did ;  
And gave to her the shawl, and swathed his charge  
In the foldings of his plaid ; and when it thrust  
Its small round face against his breast, and felt  
With small red hands for warmth,—unbearable  
Pains of great pity rent his straitened heart,  
For the poor upland dwellers had been out  
Since morning dawn, at early milking time,  
Wandering and stumbling in the drift. And now,  
Lamed with a fall, half crippled by the cold,  
Hardly prevailed his arm to drag her on,  
That ill-clad child, who yet the younger child  
Had motherly cared to shield. So toiling through  
The great white storm coming, and coming yet,  
And coming till the world confounded sat  
With all her fair familiar features gone,  
The mountains muffled in an eddying swirl,



He led or bore them, and the little one  
 Peered from her shelter, pleased; but oft would mourn  
 The elder, 'They will beat me : O my can,  
 I left my can of milk upon the moor.'  
 And he compared her trouble with his own,  
 And had no heart to speak. And yet 't was keen ;  
 It filled her to the putting down of pain  
 And hunger—what could his do more ?

He brought

The children to their home, and suddenly  
 Regained himself, and wondering at himself,  
 That he had borne, and yet been dumb so long,  
 The weary wailing of the girl : he paid  
 Money to buy her pardon ; heard them say,  
 'Peace, we have feared for you ; forget the milk,  
 It is no matter !' and went forth again  
 And waded in the snow, and quietly  
 Considered in his patience what to do  
 With all the dull remainder of his days.

With dusk he was at home, and felt it good  
 To hear his kindred talking, for it broke  
 A mocking endless echo in his soul,  
 'It is no matter !' and he could not choose  
 But mutter, though the weariness o'ercame  
 His spirit, 'Peace, it is no matter ; peace,  
 It is no matter !' For he felt that all  
 Was as it had been, and his father's heart



Was easy, knowing not how that same day  
Hope with her tender colours and delight  
(He should not care to have him know) were dead ;  
Yea, to all these, his nearest and most dear,  
It was no matter. And he heard them talk  
Of timber felled, of certain fruitful fields,  
And profitable markets.

All for him

Their plans, and yet the echoes swarmed and swam  
About his head, whenever there was pause ;  
'It is no matter !' And his greater self  
Arose in him and fought. 'It matters much,  
It matters all to these, that not to-day  
Nor ever they should know it. I will hide  
The wound ; ay, hide it with a sleepless care.  
What ! shall I make these three to drink of rue,  
Because my cup is bitter ?' And he thrust  
Himself in thought away, and made his ears  
Hearken, and caused his voice, that yet did seem  
Another, to make answer, when they spoke,  
As there had been no snowstorm, and no porch,  
And no despair.

So this went on awhile

Until the snow had melted from the wold,  
And he, one noonday, wandering up a lane,  
Met on a turn the woman whom he loved.  
Then, even to trembling he was moved : his speech  
Faltered ; but when the common kindly words

Of greeting were all said, and she passed on,  
 He could not bear her sweetness and his pain.  
 'Muriel!' he cried; and when she heard her name,  
 She turned. 'You know I love you?' he broke out:  
 She answered 'Yes,' and sighed.

'O pardon me,  
 Pardon me,' quoth the lover; 'let me rest  
 In certainty, and hear it from your mouth:  
 Is he with whom I saw you once of late  
 To call you wife?' 'I hope so,' she replied;  
 And over all her face the rose-bloom came,  
 As thinking on that other, unaware  
 Her eyes waxed tender. When he looked on her,  
 Standing to answer him, with lovely shame,  
 Submiss, and yet not his, a passionate,  
 A quickened sense of his great impotence  
 To drive away the doom got hold on him;  
 He set his teeth to force the unbearable  
 Misery back, his wide awakened eyes  
 Flashed as with flame.

And she, all overawed  
 And mastered by his manhood, waited yet,  
 And trembled at the deep she could not sound;  
 A passionate nature in a storm; a heart  
 Wild with a mortal pain, and in the grasp  
 Of an immortal love.

'Farewell,' he said,  
 Recovering words, and when she gave her hand,

' My thanks for your good candour ; for I feel  
 That it has cost you something.' Then, the blush  
 Yet on her face, she said : ' It was your due :  
 But keep this matter from your friends and kin,  
 We would not have it known.' Then cold and proud,  
 Because there leaped from under his straight lids,  
 And instantly was veiled, a keen surprise—  
 ' He wills it, and I therefore think it well.'  
 Thereon they parted ; but from that time forth,  
 Whether they met on festal eve, in field,  
 Or at the church, she ever bore herself  
 Proudly, for she had felt a certain pain,  
 The disapproval hastily betrayed  
 And quickly hidden hurt her. ' 'T was a grace,'  
 She thought, ' to tell this man the thing he asked,  
 And he rewards me with surprise. I like  
 No one's surprise, and least of all bestowed  
 Where he bestowed it.'

But the spring came on :  
 Looking to wed in April, all her thoughts  
 Grew loving ; she would fain the world had waxed  
 More happy with her happiness, and oft  
 Walking among the flowery woods she felt  
 Their loveliness reach down into her heart,  
 And knew with them the ecstasies of growth,  
 The rapture that was satisfied with light,  
 The pleasure of the leaf in exquisite  
 Expansion, through the lovely longed-for spring.

And as for him—(Some narrow hearts there are  
That suffer blight when that they fed upon  
As something to complete their being fails,  
And they retire into their holds and pine,  
And long restrained grow stern. But some there are  
That in a sacred want and hunger rise,  
And draw the misery home and live with it,  
And excellent in honour wait, and will  
That somewhat good should yet be found in it,  
Else wherefore were they born?)—and as for him,  
He loved her, but his peace and welfare made  
The sunshine of three lives. The cheerful grange  
Threw open wide its hospitable doors  
And drew in guests for him. The garden flowers,  
Sweet budding wonders, all were set for him.  
In him the eyes at home were satisfied,  
And if he did but laugh the ear approved.

What then? He dwelt among them as of old,  
And taught his mouth to smile.

And time went on,  
Till on a morning, when the perfect spring  
Rested among her leaves, he journeying home  
After short sojourn in a neighbouring town,  
Stopped at the little station on the line  
That ran between his woods; a lonely place  
And quiet, and a woman and a child  
Got out. He noted them, but walking on

Quickly, went back into the wood, impelled  
By hope, for, passing, he had seen his love,  
And she was sitting on a rustic seat  
That overlooked the line, and he desired  
With longing indescribable to look  
Upon her face again. And he drew near.  
She was right happy ; she was waiting there.  
He felt that she was waiting for her lord.  
She cared no whit if Laurence went or stayed,  
But answered when he spoke, and dropped her cheek  
In her fair hand.

And he, not able yet  
To force himself away, and never more  
Behold her, gathered blossom, primrose flowers,  
And wild anemone, for many a clump  
Grew all about him, and the hazel rods  
Were nodding with their catkins. But he heard  
The stopping train, and felt that he must go ;  
His time was come. There was nought else to do  
Or hope for. With the blossom he drew near,  
And would have had her take it from his hand ;  
But she, half-lost in thought, held out her own,  
And then remembering him and his long love,  
She said, ' I thank you ; pray you now forget,  
Forget me, Laurence,' and her lovely eyes  
Softened ; but he was dumb, till through the trees  
Suddenly broke upon their quietude  
The woman and her child. And Muriel said,

‘What will you?’ She made answer quick and keen,  
‘Your name, my lady; ’t is your name I want,  
Tell me your name.’ Not startled, not displeased,  
But with a musing sweetness on her mouth,  
As if considering in how short a while  
It would be changed, she lifted up her face  
And gave it, and the little child drew near  
And pulled her gown, and prayed her for the flowers.  
Then Laurence, not content to leave them so,  
Nor yet to wait the coming lover, spoke,  
‘Your errand with this lady?’—‘And your right  
To ask it?’ she broke out with sudden heat  
And passion: ‘What is that to you? Poor child!  
Madam!’ And Muriel lifted up her face  
And looked,—they looked into each other’s eyes.

‘That man who comes,’ the clear-voiced woman cried,  
‘That man with whom you think to wed so soon,  
You must not heed him. What! the world is full  
Of men, and some are good, and most, God knows  
Better than he,—that I should say it!—far  
Better.’ And down her face the large tears ran,  
And Muriel’s wild dilated eyes looked up,  
Taking a terrible meaning from her words;  
And Laurence stared about him half in doubt  
If this were real, for all things were so blithe,  
And soft air tossed the little flowers about;  
The child was singing, and the blackbirds piped,

Glad in fair sunshine. And the women both  
Were quiet, gazing in each other's eyes.

He found his voice, and spoke : ' This is not well,  
Though whom you speak of should have done you  
wrong ;

A man that could desert and plan to wed  
Will not his purpose yield to God and right,  
Only to law. You, whom I pity so much,  
If you be come this day to urge a claim,  
You will not tell me that your claim will hold ;  
'T is only, if I read aright, the old,  
Sorrowful, hateful story !'

Muriel sighed,  
With a dull patience that he marvelled at,  
' Be plain with me. I know not what to think,  
Unless you are his wife. Are you his wife ?  
Be plain with me.' And all too quietly,  
With running down of tears, the answer came,  
' Ay, madam, ay ! the worse for him and me.'  
Then Muriel heard her lover's foot anear,  
And cried upon him with a bitter cry,  
Sharp and despairing. And those two stood back,  
With such affright, and violent anger stirred.  
He broke from out the thicket to her side,  
Not knowing. But, her hands before her face,  
She sat ; and, stepping close, that woman came  
And faced him. Then said Muriel, ' O my heart,



Herbert !’—and he was dumb, and ground his teeth,  
And lifted up his hand and looked at it,  
And at the woman ; but a man was there  
Who whirled her from her place, and thrust himself  
Between them ; he was strong—a stalwart man :  
And Herbert thinking on it, knew his name.  
‘What good,’ quoth he, ‘though you and I should strive  
And wrestle all this April day ? A word,  
And not a blow, is what these women want :  
Master yourself, and say it.’ But he, weak  
With passion and great anguish, flung himself  
Upon the seat and cried, ‘O lost, my love !  
O Muriel, Muriel !’ And the woman spoke,  
‘Sir, ’t was an evil day you wed with me ;  
And you were young ; I know it, sir, right well.  
Sir, I have worked ; I have not troubled you,  
Not for myself, nor for your child. I know  
We are not equal.’ ‘Hold !’ he cried ; ‘have done.  
Your still, tame words are worse than hate or scorn.  
Get from me ! Ay, my wife, my wife, indeed !  
All’s done. You hear it, Muriel, if you can,  
O sweet, forgive me.’

Then the woman moved  
Slowly away : her little singing child  
Went in her wake : and Muriel dropped her hands,  
And sat before these two that loved her so,  
Mute and unheeding. There were angry words,  
She knew, but yet she could not hear the words ;



And afterwards the man she loved stooped down  
And kissed her forehead once, and then withdrew  
To look at her, and with a gesture pray  
Her pardon. And she tried to speak, but failed,  
And presently, and soon, Oh,—he was gone.

She heard him go, and Laurence, still as stone,  
Remained beside her ; and she put her hand  
Before her face again, and afterward  
She heard a voice, as if a long way off,  
Some one entreated, but she could not heed.  
Thereon he drew her hand away, and raised  
Her passive from her seat. So then she knew  
That he would have her go with him, go home—  
It was not far to go—a dreary home.  
A crippled aunt, of birth and lineage high,  
Had in her youth, and for a place and home,  
Married the stern old rector ; and the girl  
Dwelt with them : she was orphaned—had no kin  
Nearer than they. And Laurence brought her in,  
And spared to her the telling of this woe.  
He sought her kindred where they sat apart,  
And laid before them all the cruel thing,  
As he had seen it. After, he retired :  
And restless, and not master of himself,  
He day and night haunted the rectory lanes ;  
And all things, even to the spreading out  
Of leaves, their flickering shadows on the ground,

Or sailing of the slow, white cloud, or peace  
And glory and great light on mountain heads, —  
All things were leagued against him—ministered  
By likeness or by contrast to his love.

But what was that to Muriel, though her peace  
He would have purchased for her with all prayers,  
And costly, passionate, despairing tears?  
O what to her that he should find it worse  
To bear her life's undoing than his own?

She let him see her, and she made no moan,  
But talked full calmly of indifferent things,  
Which when he heard, and marked the faded eyes  
And lovely wasted cheek, he started up  
With 'This I cannot bear!' and, shamed to feel  
His manhood giving way, and utterly  
Subdued by her sweet patience and his pain,  
Made haste and from the window sprang, and paced,  
Battling and chiding with himself, the maze.

She suffered, and he could not make her well  
For all his loving;—he was nought to her.  
And now his passionate nature, set astir,  
Fought with the pain that could not be endured;  
And like a wild thing suddenly aware  
'That it is caged, which flings and bruises all  
Its body at the bars, he rose, and raged

Against the misery : then he made all worse  
 With tears. But when he came to her again,  
 Willing to talk as they had talked before,  
 She sighed, and said, with that strange quietness,  
 ‘ I know you have been crying . ’ and she bent  
 Her own fair head and wept.

She felt the cold—

The freezing cold that deadened all her life—  
 Give way a little ; for this passionate  
 Sorrow, and all for her, relieved her heart,  
 And brought some natural warmth, some natural tears.

### III

And after that, though oft he sought her door,  
 He might not see her. First they said to him  
 ‘ She is not well ; ’ and afterwards, ‘ Her wish  
 Is ever to be quiet.’ Then in haste  
 They took her from the place, because so fast  
 She faded. As for him, though youth and strength  
 Can bear the weight as of a world, at last  
 The burden of it tells,—he heard it said,  
 When autumn came, ‘ The poor sweet thing will die :  
 That shock was mortal.’ And he cared no more  
 To hide, if yet he could have hidden, the blight  
 That was laying waste his heart. He journeyed south  
 To Devon, where she dwelt with other kin,

Good, kindly women ; and he wrote to them,  
Praying that he might see her ere she died.

So in her patience she permitted him  
To be about her, for it eased his heart ;  
And as for her that was to die so soon,  
What did it signify ? She let him weep  
Some passionate tears beside her couch, she spoke  
Pitying words, and then they made him go.  
It was enough, they said, her time was short,  
And he had seen her. He HAD seen, and felt  
The bitterness of death ; but he went home,  
Being satisfied in that great longing now,  
And able to endure what might befall.

And Muriel lay, and faded with the year ;  
She lay at the door of death, that opened not  
To take her in ; for when the days once more  
Began a little to increase, she felt—  
And it was sweet to her, she was so young—  
She felt a longing for the time of flowers,  
And dreamed that she was walking in that wood  
With her two feet among the primroses.

Then when the violet opened, she rose up  
And walked : the tender leaf and tender light  
Did solace her ; but she was white and wan,

The shadow of that Muriel, in the wood  
Who listened to those deadly words.

And now

Empurpled seas began to blush and bloom,  
Doves made sweet moaning, and the guelder rose  
In a great stillness dropped, and ever dropped,  
Her wealth about her feet, and there it lay,  
And drifted not at all. The lilac spread  
Odorous essence round her ; and full oft,  
When Muriel felt the warmth her pulses cheer,  
She, faded, went among the Maytide bloom,  
And with a reverent quiet in her soul,  
Took back—it was His will—her time, and sat  
Learning again to live.

Thus as she sat

Upon a day, she was aware of one  
Who at a distance marked her. This again  
Another day, and she was vexed, for yet  
She longed for quiet ; but she heard a foot  
Pass once again, and beckoned through the trees  
‘ Laurence ! ’ And all impatient of unrest  
And strife, ay, even of the sight of them,  
When he drew near, with tired, tired lips,  
As if her soul upbraided him, she said,  
‘ Why have you done this thing ? ’ He answered her,  
‘ I am not always master in the fight :  
I could not help it.’

‘ What ! ’ she sighed, ‘ not yet ! ’

Oh, I am sorry ;' and she talked to him  
As one who looked to live, imploring him—  
' Try to forget me. Let your fancy dwell  
Elsewhere, nor me enrich with it so long ;  
It wearies me to think of this your love.  
Forget me !'

He made answer, ' I will try :  
The task will take me all my life to learn,  
Or were it learned, I know not how to live ;  
This pain is part of life and being now—  
It is myself ; but yet—but I will try.'  
Then she spoke friendly to him—of his home,  
His father, and the old, brave, loving folk ;  
She bade him think of them. And not her words,  
But having seen her, satisfied his heart.  
He left her, and went home to live his life,  
And all the summer heard it said of her,  
' Yet, she grows stronger ;' but when autumn came  
Again she drooped.

A bitter thing it is  
To lose at once the lover and the love ;  
For who receiveth not may yet keep life  
In the spirit with bestowal. But for her,  
This Muriel, all was gone. The man she loved,  
Not only from her present had withdrawn,  
But from her past, and there was no such man,  
There never had been.

He was not as one

Who takes love in, like some sweet bird, and holds  
The wingèd fluttering stranger to his breast,  
Till, after transient stay, all unaware  
It leaves him : it has flown. No ; this may live  
In memory—loved till death. He was not vile ;  
For who by choice would part with that pure bird,  
And lose the exaltation of its song ?  
He had not strength of will to keep it fast,  
Nor warmth of heart to keep it warm, nor life  
Of thought to make the echo sound for him  
After the song was done. Pity that man :  
His music is all flown, and he forgets  
The sweetness of it, till at last he thinks  
'T was no great matter. But he was not vile,  
Only a thing to pity most in man,  
Weak—only poor, and, if he knew it, undone.  
But Herbert ! When she mused on it, her soul  
Would fain have hidden him for evermore,  
Even from herself : so pure of speech, so frank,  
So full of household kindness. Ah, so good  
And true ! A little, she had sometimes thought,  
Despondent for himself, but strong of faith  
In God, and faith in her, this man had seemed.

Ay, he was gone ! and she whom he had wed,  
As Muriel learned, was sick, was poor, was sad.  
And Muriel wrote to comfort her, and send,  
From her small store, money to help her need,



With, 'Pray you keep it secret.' Then the whole  
Of the cruel tale was told.

What more? She died.

Her kin, profuse of thanks, not bitterly,  
Wrote of the end. 'Our sister fain had seen  
Her husband; prayed him sore to come. But no.  
And then she prayed him that he would forgive,  
Madam, her breaking of the truth to you.  
Dear madam, he was angry, yet we think  
He might have let her see, before she died,  
The words she wanted, but he did not write  
Till she was gone—"I neither can forgive,  
Nor would I if I could."'

'Patience, my heart!

And this, then, is the man I loved!'

But yet

He sought a lower level, for he wrote  
Telling the story with a different hue,  
Telling of freedom. He desired to come,  
'For now,' said he, 'O love, may all be well.'  
And she rose up against it in her soul,  
For she despised him. And with passionate tears  
Of shame, she wrote, and only wrote these words—  
'Herbert, I will not see you.'

Then she drooped

Again; it is so bitter to despise;  
And all her strength, when autumn leaves down  
dropped,



Fell from her. 'Ah!' she thought, 'I rose up once,  
I cannot rise up now; here is the end.'  
And all her kinsfolk thought, 'It is the end.'

But when that other heard, 'It is the end,'  
His heart was sick, and he, as by a power  
Far stronger than himself, was driven to her.  
Reason rebelled against it, but his will  
Required it of him with a craving strong  
As life, and passionate though hopeless pain.

She, when she saw his face, considered him  
Full quietly, let all excuses pass  
Not answered, and considered yet again.

'He had heard that she was sick; what could he do  
But come, and ask her pardon that he came?'  
What could he do, indeed?—a weak white girl  
Held all his heartstrings in her small white hand;  
His youth, and power, and majesty were hers,  
And not his own.

She looked, and pitied him,  
Then spoke: 'He loves me with a love that lasts.  
Ah, me! that I might get away from it,  
Or, better, hear it said that love is NOT,  
And then I could have rest. My time is short,  
I think, so short.' And roused against himself  
In stormy wrath, that it should be his doom

Her to disquiet whom he loved ; ay, her  
 For whom he would have given all his rest,  
 If there were any left to give ; he took  
 Her words up bravely, promising once more  
 Absence, and praying pardon ; but some tears  
 Dropped quietly upon her cheek.

‘ Remain,’

She said, ‘ for there is something to be told,  
 Some words that you must hear.

And first hear this:

God has been good to me ; you must not think  
 That I despair. There is a quiet time  
 Like evening in my soul. I have no heart,  
 For cruel Herbert killed it long ago,  
 And death strides on. Sit, then, and give your mind  
 To listen, and your eyes to look at me. .  
 Look at my face, Laurence, how white it is ;  
 Look at my hand—my beauty is all gone.’  
 And Laurence lifted up his eyes ; he looked,  
 But answered, from their deeps that held no doubt,  
 Far otherwise than she had willed—they said,  
 ‘ Lovelier than ever.’

Yet her words went on,  
 Cold and so quiet, ‘ I have suffered much,  
 And I would fain that none who care for me  
 Should suffer a like pang that I can spare.  
 Therefore,’ said she, and not at all could blush,  
 ‘ I have brought my mind of late to think of this :

That since your life is spoilt (not willingly,  
My God, not willingly by me), 't were well  
To give you choice of griefs.

Were it not best

To weep for a dead love, and afterwards  
Be comforted the sooner, that she died  
Remote, and left not in your house and life  
Aught to remind you? That indeed were best.  
But were it best to weep for a dead wife,  
And let the sorrow spend and satisfy  
Itself with all expression, and so end?  
I think not so; but if for you 't is best,  
Then—do not answer with too sudden words:  
It matters much to you; not much, not much  
To me,—then truly I will die your wife;  
I will marry you.'

What was he like to say,

But, overcome with love and tears, to choose  
The keener sorrow,—take it to his heart,  
Cherish it, make it part of him, and watch  
Those eyes that were his light till they should close?

He answered her with eager, faltering words,  
'I choose—my heart is yours—die in my arms.'

But was it well? Truly, at first, for him  
It was not well: he saw her fade, and cried,  
'When may this be?' She answered, 'When you will,'

And cared not much, for very faint she grew,  
Tired and cold. Oft in her soul she thought,  
'If I could slip away before the ring  
Is on my hand, it were a blessed lot  
For both,—a blessed thing for him, and me.'

But it was not so ; for the day had come—  
Was over ; days and months had come, and Death—  
Within whose shadow she had lain, which made  
Earth and its loves, and even its bitterness,  
Indifferent,—Death withdrew himself, and life  
Woke up, and found that it was folded fast,  
Drawn to another life for evermore.

O, what a waking ! After it there came  
Great silence. She got up once more, in spring,  
And walked, but not alone, among the flowers.  
She thought within herself, 'What have I done ?  
How shall I do the rest ?' And he, who felt  
Her inmost thought, was silent even as she.

'What have we done ?' she thought. But as for  
him,

When she began to look him in the face,  
Considering, 'Thus and thus his features are,'  
For she had never thought on them before,  
She read their grave repose aright. She knew  
That in the stronghold of his heart, held back,  
Hidden reserves of measureless content  
Kept house with happy thought, for her sake mute.

Most patient Muriel ! when he brought her home,  
She took the place they gave her.—strove to please  
His kin, and did not fail ; but yet thought on,  
' What have I done ? how shall I do the rest ?  
Ah ! so contented, Laurence, with this wife  
That loves you not, for all the stateliness  
And grandeur of your manhood, and the deeps  
In your blue eyes.' And after that awhile  
She rested from such thinking, put it by  
And waited. She had thought on death before :  
But no, this Muriel was not yet to die ;  
And when she saw her little tender babe,  
She felt how much the happy days of life  
Outweigh the sorrowful. A tiny thing,  
Whom when it slept the lovely mother nursed  
With reverent love, whom when it woke she fed  
And wondered at, and lost herself in long  
Rapture of watching, and contentment deep.

Once while she sat, this babe upon her knee,  
Her husband and his father standing nigh,  
About to ride ; the grandmother, all pride  
And consequence, so deep in learned talk  
Of infants, and their little ways and wiles,  
Broke off to say, ' I never saw a babe  
So like its father.' And the thought was new  
To Muriel ; she looked up, and when she looked,  
Her husband smiled. And she, the lovely bloom

Flushing her face, would fain he had not known,  
Nor noticed her surprise. But he did know ;  
Yet there was pleasure in his smile, and love  
Tender and strong. He kissed her, kissed his babe,  
With ' Goody, you are left in charge, take care '—  
' As if I needed telling !' quoth the dame ;  
And they were gone.

Then Muriel, lost in thought,  
Gazed ; and the grandmother, with open pride,  
Tended the lovely pair ; till Muriel said,  
' Is she so like ? Dear granny, get me now  
The picture that his father has ;' and soon  
The old woman put it in her hand.

The wife,  
Considering it with deep and strange delight,  
Forgot for once her babe, and looked and learned.

A mouth for mastery and manful work,  
A certain brooding sweetness in the eyes,  
A brow the harbour of grave thought, and hair  
Saxon of hue. She conned ; then blushed again,  
Remembering now, when she had looked on him,  
The sudden radiance of her husband's smile.

But Muriel did not send the picture back ;  
She kept it ; while her beauty and her babe  
Flourished together, and in health and peace  
She lived.

Her husband never said to her,  
'Love, are you happy?' never said to her,  
'Sweet, do you love me?' and at first, whene'er  
They rode together in the lanes, and paused,  
Stopping their horses, when the day was hot,  
In the shadow of a tree, to watch the clouds,  
Ruffled in drifting on the jagged rocks  
That topped the mountains,—when she sat by him,  
Withdrawn at even while the summer stars  
Came starting out of nothing, as new made,  
She felt a little trouble, and a wish  
That he would yet keep silence, and he did.  
That one reserve he would not touch, but still  
Respected.

Muriel grew more brave in time,  
And talked at ease, and felt disquietude  
Fade. And another child was given to her.

'Now we shall do,' the old great-grandsire cried,  
'For this is the right sort, a boy.' 'Fie, fie,'  
Quoth the good dame; 'but never heed you, love,  
He thinks them both as right as right can be.'

But Laurence went from home, ere yet the boy  
Was three weeks old. It fretted him to go,  
But still he said, 'I must : ' and she was left  
Much with the kindly dame, whose gentle care



Was like a mother's ; and the two could talk  
Sweetly, for all the difference in their years.

But unaware, the wife betrayed a wish  
That she had known why Laurence left her thus.  
'Ay, love,' the dame made answer ; 'for he said,  
'Goody,' before he left, "if Muriel ask  
No question, tell her nought ; but if she let  
Any disquietude appear to you,  
Say what you know."'" 'What?' Muriel said, and  
laughed,  
'I ask, then.'

'Child, it is that your old love,  
Some two months past, was here. Nay, never start :  
He 's gone. He came, our Laurence met him near ;  
He said that he was going over seas,  
"And might I see your wife this only once,  
And get her pardon?"'

'Mercy !' Muriel cried,  
'But Laurence does not wish it ?'  
'Nay, now, nay,'

Quoth the good dame.

'I cannot,' Muriel cried ;  
'He does not, surely, think I should.'  
'Not he,'

The kind old woman said, right soothingly.  
'Does not he ever know, love, ever do  
What you like best ?'



And Muriel, trembling yet,  
 Agreed. 'I heard him say,' the dame went on,  
 'For I was with him when they met that day,  
 "It would not be agreeable to my wife."'

Then Muriel, pondering,—'And he said no more?  
 You think he did not add, "nor to myself?"'  
 And with her soft, calm, inward voice, the dame  
 Unruffled answered, 'No, sweet heart, not he :  
 What need he care?' 'And why not?' Muriel cried,  
 Longing to hear the answer. 'Oh, he knows,  
 He knows, love, very well :' with that she smiled.  
 'Bless your fair face, you have not really thought  
 He did not know you loved him?'

Muriel said,

'He never told me, goody, that he knew.'  
 'Well,' quoth the dame, 'but it may chance, my  
 dear,  
 That he thinks best to let old troubles sleep :  
 Why need he rouse them? You are happy, sure?  
 But if one asks, "Art happy?" why, it sets  
 The thoughts a-working. No, say I, let love  
 Let peace and happy folk alone.

He said,

"It would not be agreeable to my wife."  
 And he went on to add ; in course of time  
 That he would ask you, when it suited you,  
 To write a few kind words.'

‘Yes,’ Muriel said,  
‘I can do that.’

‘So Laurence went, you see,’  
The soft voice added, ‘to take down that child.  
Laurence had written oft about the child,  
And now, at last, the father made it known  
He could not take him. He has lost, they say,  
His money, with much gambling ; now he wants  
To lead a good, true, working life. He wrote,  
And let this so be seen, that Laurence went  
And took the child, and took the money down  
To pay.’

And Muriel found her talking sweet,  
And asked once more, the rather that she longed  
To speak again of Laurence, ‘And you think  
He knows I love him?’

‘Ay, good sooth, he knows :  
No fear ; but he is like his father, love.  
His father never asked my pretty child  
One prying question ; took her as she was ;  
Trusted her ; she has told me so : he knew  
A woman’s nature. Laurence is the same.  
He knows you love him ; but he will not speak ;  
No, never. Some men are such gentlemen !’



*SONGS OF THE NIGHT WATCHES,*

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY SONG OF EVENING, AND A  
CONCLUDING SONG OF THE EARLY DAY.

INTRODUCTORY.

*(Old English Manner.)*

APPRENTICED.



COME out and hear the waters shoot, the  
owlet hoot, the owlet hoot ;  
Yon crescent moon, a golden boat, hangs  
dim behind the tree, O !

The dropping thorn makes white the grass, O sweetest  
lass, and sweetest lass ;

Come out and smell the ricks of hay adown the  
croft with me, O !

‘ My granny nods before her wheel, and drops her reel,  
and drops her reel ;

My father with his crony talks as gay as gay can  
be, O !

But all the milk is yet to skim, ere light wax dim, ere  
light wax dim ;

How can I step adown the croft, my 'prentice lad,  
with thee, O ?'

' And must ye bide, yet waiting 's long, and love is  
strong, and love is strong ;

And O ! had I but served the time, that takes so  
long to flee, O !

And thou, my lass, by morning's light wast all in white,  
wast all in white,

And parson stood within the rails, a-marrying me  
and thee, O.'

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THE FIRST WATCH.

TIRED.

I

O, I WOULD tell you more, but I am tired ;

For I have longed, and I have had my will ;

I pleaded in my spirit, I desired :

' Ah ! let me only see him, and be still

All my days after.'

Rock, and rock, and rock,

Over the falling, rising watery world,

Sail, beautiful ship, along the leaping main ;

The chirping land-birds follow flock on flock  
To light on a warmer plain.  
White as weaned lambs the little wavelets curled,  
Fall over in harmless play,  
As these do far away ;  
Sail, bird of doom, along the shimmering sea,  
All under thy broad wings that overshadow thee.

## II

I am so tired,  
If I would comfort me, I know not how,  
For I have seen thee, lad, as I desired,  
And I have nothing left to long for now.

Nothing at all. And did I wait for thee,  
Often and often, while the light grew dim,  
And through the lilac branches I could see,  
Under a saffron sky, the purple rim  
O' the heaving moorland? Ay. And then would float  
Up from behind as it were a golden boat,  
Freighted with fancies, all o' the wonder of life,  
Love—such a slender moon, going up and up,  
Waxing so fast from night to night,  
And swelling like an orange flower-bud, bright,  
Fated, methought, to round as to a golden cup,  
And hold to my two lips life's best of wine.  
Most beautiful crescent moon,

Ship of the sky !

Across the unfurrowed reaches sailing high.

Methought that it would come my way full soon,  
Laden with blessings that were all, all mine—  
A golden ship, with balm and spiceries rife,  
That ere its day was done should hear thee call me  
wife.

## III

All over ! the celestial sign hath failed ;  
The orange flower-bud shuts ; the ship hath sailed,  
And sunk behind the long low-lying hills.  
The love that fed on daily kisses dieth ;  
The love kept warm by nearness lieth,  
Wounded and wan ;  
The love hope nourished bitter tears distils,  
And faints with nought to feed upon.  
Only there stirreth very deep below  
The hidden beating slow,  
And the blind yearning, and the long-drawn breath  
Of the love that conquers death.

## IV

Had we not loved full long, and lost all fear,  
My ever, my only dear ?  
Yes ; and I saw thee start upon thy way,  
So sure that we should meet  
Upon our trysting-day.

And even absence then to me was sweet,  
Because it brought me time to brood  
Upon thy dearness in the solitude.  
But ah! to stay, and stay,  
And let that moon of April wane itself away,  
And let the lovely May  
Make ready all her buds for June ;  
And let the glossy finch forego her tune  
That she brought with her in the spring,  
And never more, I think, to me can sing ;  
And then to lead thee home another bride,  
In the sultry summertide,  
And all forget me save for shame full sore,  
That made thee pray me, absent, 'See my face no more.'

## v

O, hard, most hard ! But while my fretted heart  
Shut out, shut down, and full of pain,  
Sobbed to itself apart,  
Ached to itself in vain,  
One came who loveth me  
As I love thee. . . .  
And let my God remember him for this,  
As I do hope He will forget thy kiss,  
Nor visit on thy stately head  
Aught that thy mouth hath sworn, or thy two eyes  
have said. . . .



He came, and it was dark. He came, and sighed  
 Because he knew the sorrow,—whispering low,  
 And fast, and thick, as one that speaks by rote :

‘The vessel lieth in the river reach,  
     A mile above the beach,  
 And she will sail at the turning o’ the tide.’  
     He said, ‘I have a boat,  
     And were it good to go,  
 And un beholden in the vessel’s wake  
 Look on the man thou lovedst, and forgive,  
 As he embarks, a shamefaced fugitive.  
     Come, then, with me.’

## VI

O, how he sighed ! The little stars did wink,  
 And it was very dark. I gave my hand,—  
 He led me out across the pasture land,  
     And through the narrow croft,  
     Down to the river’s brink.

When thou wast full in spring, thou little sleepy thing,  
 The yellow flags that broidered thee would stand  
 Up to their chins in water, and full oft  
 We pulled them and the other shining flowers,  
     That all are gone to-day :  
 We two, that had so many things to say,  
     So many hopes to render clear :  
 And they are all gone after thee, my dear,—



Gone after those sweet hours,  
That tender light, that balmy rain ;  
Gone 'as a wind that passeth away,  
And cometh not again.'

## VII

I only saw the stars,—I could not see  
The river,—and they seemed to lie  
As far below as the other stars were high.  
I trembled like a thing about to die :  
It was so awful 'neath the majesty  
Of that great crystal height, that overhung  
The blackness at our feet,  
Unseen to fleet and fleet  
The flocking stars among,  
And only hear the dipping of the oar,  
And the small wave's caressing of the darksome shore.

## VIII

Less real it was than any dream.  
Ah me ! to hear the bending willows shiver,  
As we shot quickly from the silent river,  
And felt the swaying and the flow  
That bore us down the deeper, wider stream,  
Whereto its nameless waters go :  
O ! I shall always, when I shut mine eyes,  
See that weird sight again ;

The lights from anchor'd vessels hung ;  
 The phantom moon, that sprung  
 Suddenly up in dim and angry wise,  
     From the rim o' the moaning main,  
     And touched with elfin light  
 The two long oars whereby we made our flight,  
     Along the reaches of the night ;  
 Then furrowed up a lowering cloud,  
 Went in, and left us darker than before,  
 To feel our way as the midnight watches wore,  
 And lie in HER lee, with mournful faces bowed,  
 That should receive and bear with her away  
 The brightest portion of my sunniest day—  
 The laughter of the land, the sweetness of the shore.

## IX

And I beheld thee : saw the lantern flash  
 Down on thy face, when thou didst climb the side,  
 And thou wert pale, pale as the patient bride  
     That followed : both a little sad,  
 Leaving of home and kin. 'Thy courage glad,  
     That once did bear thee on,  
 That brow of thine had lost ; the fervour rash  
 Of unforeboding youth thou hadst foregone.  
 O, what a little moment, what a crumb  
 Of comfort for a heart to feed upon !  
     And that was all its sum :

A glimpse, and not a meeting—  
A drawing near by night,  
To sigh to thee an unacknowledged greeting,  
And all between the flashing of a light  
And its retreating.

## X

Then after, ere she spread her wafting wings,  
The ship—and weighed her anchor to depart,  
We stole from her dark lee, like guilty things ;  
And there was silence in my heart,  
And silence in the upper and the nether deep.

O sleep ! O sleep !

Do not forget me. Sometimes come and sweep,  
Now I have nothing left, thy healing hand  
Over the lids that crave thy visits bland,  
Thou kind, thou comforting one :  
For I have seen his face, as I desired,  
And all my story is done.

O, I am tired !

## THE MIDDLE WATCH.

## I

I WOKE in the night, and the darkness was heavy and  
deep ;

I had known it was dark in my sleep,

And I rose and looked out,

And the fathomless vault was all sparkling, set thick  
round about

With the ancient inhabitants silent, and wheeling too far  
For man's heart, like a voyaging frigate, to sail, where  
remote

In the sheen of their glory they float,

Or man's soul, like a bird, to fly near, of their beams to  
partake,

And dazed in their wake,

Drink day that is born of a star.

I murmured, ' Remoteness and greatness, how deep you  
are set,

How afar in the rim of the whole ;

You know nothing of me, or of man, nor of earth, O, nor  
yet

Of our light-bearer—drawing the marvellous moons as  
they roll,

Of our regent, the sun.

I look on you trembling, and think, in the dark with my  
soul,

'How small is our place 'mid the kingdoms and nations  
of God :

These are greater than we, every one.'

And there falls a great fear, and a dread cometh over,  
that cries,

'O my hope ! Is there any mistake ?

Did He speak ? Did I hear ? Did I listen aright, if He  
spake ?

Did I answer Him duly ? For surely I now am awake,  
If never I woke until now.'

And a light, baffling wind, that leads nowhither, plays on  
my brow.

As a sleep, I must think on my day, of my path as untrod,  
Or trodden in dreams, in a dreamland whose coasts are  
a doubt ;

Whose countries recede from my thoughts, as they grope  
round about,

And vanish, and tell me not how.

Be kind to our darkness, O Fashioner, dwelling in light,  
And feeding the lamps of the sky ;

Look down upon this one, and let it be sweet in Thy sight,  
I pray Thee, to-night.

O watch whom Thou madest to dwell on its soil, Thou  
Most High !

For this is a world full of sorrow (there may be but one) ;  
Keep watch o'er its dust, else Thy children for aye are  
undone,

For this is a world where we die.

## II

With that, a still voice in my spirit that moved and that  
yearned,

(There fell a great calm while it spake,)

I had heard it erewhile, but the noises of life are so  
loud,

That sometimes it dies in the cry of the street and the  
crowd :

To the simple it cometh,—the child, or asleep, or  
awake,

And they know not from whence ; of its nature the wise  
never learned

By his wisdom ; its secret the worker ne'er earned

By his toil ; and the rich among men never bought with  
his gold ;

Nor the times of its visiting monarchs controlled,

Nor the jester put down with his jeers

(For it moves where it will), nor its season the  
aged discerned

By thought, in the ripeness of years.

O elder than reason, and stronger than will !

A voice, when the dark world is still :

Whence cometh it ? Father Immortal, thou knowest !  
and we—

We are sure of that witness, that sense which is sent us  
of Thee ;

For it moves, and it yearns in its fellowship mighty and  
dread,  
And let down to our hearts it is touched by the tears  
that we shed ;  
It is more than all meanings, and over all strife ;  
On its tongue are the laws of our life,  
And it counts up the times of the dead.

## III

I will fear you, O stars, never more.  
I have felt it ! Go on, while the world is asleep,  
Golden islands, fast moored in God's infinite deep.  
Hark, hark to the words of sweet fashion, the harpings  
of yore !  
How they sang to Him, seer and saint, in the far-away  
lands :  
‘The heavens are the work of Thy hands ;  
They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure ;  
Yea, they all shall wax old—  
But Thy throne is established, O God, and Thy years  
are made sure ;  
They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure—  
They shall pass like a tale that is told.’

Doth He answer, the Ancient of Days?  
Will He speak in the tongue and the fashion of  
men ?

(Hist ! hist ! while the heaven-hung multitudes shine in  
 His praise,  
 His language of old). Nay, He spoke with them first ;  
 it was then  
 They lifted their eyes to His throne :  
 ‘They shall call on Me, “Thou art our Father, our God,  
 Thou alone !”  
 For I made them, I led them in deserts and desolate  
 ways ;  
 I have found them a Ransom Divine ;  
 I have loved them with love everlasting, the children of  
 men :  
 I swear by Myself, they are Mine.’

---

THE MORNING WATCH.

THE COMING IN OF THE ‘MERMAIDEN.’

THE moon is bleached as white as wool,  
 And just dropping under ;  
 Every star is gone but three,  
 And they hang far asunder—  
 There’s a sea-ghost all in grey,  
 A tall shape of wonder !



I am not satisfied with sleep,—  
The night is not ended.  
But look how the sea-ghost comes,  
With wan skirts extended,  
Stealing up in this weird hour,  
When light and dark are blended.

A vessel! To the old pier end  
Her happy course she's keeping;  
I heard them name her yesterday:  
Some were pale with weeping;  
Some with their heart-hunger sighed,  
She's in—and they are sleeping.

O! now with fancied greetings blest,  
They comfort their long aching:  
The sea of sleep hath borne to them  
What would not come with waking,  
And the dreams shall most be true  
In their blissful breaking.

The stars are gone, the rose-bloom comes—  
No blush of maid is sweeter;  
The red sun, half-way out of bed,  
Shall be the first to greet her.  
None tell the news, yet sleepers wake,  
And rise, and run to meet her.

Their lost they have, they hold ; from pain  
 A keener bliss they borrow.  
 How natural is joy, my heart !  
 How easy after sorrow !  
 For once, the best is come that hope  
 Promised them ' to-morrow.'

---

CONCLUDING SONG OF DAWN.

*(Old English Manner.)*

A MORN OF MAY.

ALL the clouds about the sun lay up in golden creases,  
 (Merry rings the maiden's voice that sings at dawn of  
 day) ;  
 Lambkins woke and skipped around to dry their dewy  
 fleeces,  
 So sweetly as she carolled, all on a morn of May.

Quoth the Sergeant, ' Here I 'll halt ; here 's wine of joy  
 for drinking ;  
 To my heart she sets her hand, and in the strings doth  
 play ;  
 All among the daffodils, and fairer to my thinking,  
 And fresh as milk and roses, she sits this morn of May.'

Quoth the Sergeant, 'Work is work, but any ye might  
make me,  
If I worked for you, dear lass, I 'd count my holiday.  
I 'm your slave for good and all, an' if ye will but take  
me,  
So sweetly as ye carol upon this morn of May.'

'Medals count for worth,' quoth she, 'and scars are worn  
for honour ;  
But a slave an' if ye be, kind wooer, go your way.'  
All the nodding daffodils woke up and laughed upon her.  
O ! sweetly did she carol, all on that morn of May.

Gladsome leaves upon the bough, they fluttered fast and  
faster,  
Fretting brook, till he would speak, did chide the dull  
delay :  
'Beauty ! when I said a slave, I think I meant a master ;  
So sweetly as ye carol all on this morn of May.

'Lass, I love you ! Love is strong, and some men's  
hearts are tender.'  
Far she sought o'er wood and wold, but found not aught  
to say ;  
Mounting lark nor mantling cloud would any counsel  
render,  
Though sweetly she had carolled upon that morn of  
May.

Shy, she sought the wooer's face, and deemed the  
woeing mended ;

Proper man he was, good sooth, and one would have his  
way :

So the lass was made a wife, and so the song was ended.

O ! sweetly she did carol all on that morn of May.





## SONNETS.

### WORK.



LIKE coral insects multitudinous  
The minutes are whereof our life is made.  
They build it up as in the deep's blue shade  
It grows, it comes to light, and then, and thus  
For both there is an end. The populous  
Sea-blossoms close, our minutes that have paid  
Life's debt of work are spent ; the work is laid  
Before their feet that shall come after us.  
We may not stay to watch if it will speed,  
The bard if on some luter's string his song  
Live sweetly yet ; the hero if his star  
Doth shine. Work is its own best earthly meed,  
Else have we none more than the sea-born throng  
Who wrought those marvellous isles that bloom afar.

## AN ANCIENT CHESS KING.

HAPLY some Rajah first in the ages gone  
Amid his languid ladies fingered thee,  
While a black nightingale, sun-swart as he,  
Sang his one wife, love's passionate oraison ;  
Haply thou may'st have pleased Old Prester John  
Among his pastures, when full royally  
He sat in tent, grave shepherds at his knee,  
While lamps of balsam winked and glimmered on.  
What doest thou here? Thy masters are all dead ;  
My heart is full of ruth and yearning pain  
At sight of thee ; O king that hast a crown  
Outlasting theirs, and tell'st of greatness fled  
Through cloud-hung nights of unabated rain  
And murmurs of the dark majestic town.

---

A SNOW MOUNTAIN.

CAN I make white enough my thought for thee,  
Or wash my words in light? Thou hast no mate  
To sit aloft in the silence silently  
And twin those matchless heights undesecrate.  
Reverend as Lear, when, lorn of shelter, he  
Stood, with his old white head, surprised at fate ;  
Alone as Galileo, when, set free,  
Before the stars he mused disconsolate.

Ay, and remote, as the dead lords of song,  
 Great masters who have made us what we are,  
 For thou and they have taught us how to long  
 And feel a sacred want of the fair and far :  
 Reign, and keep life in this our deep desire—  
 Our only greatness is that we aspire.

---

SLEEP.

*(A woman speaks.)*

O SLEEP, we are beholden to thee, sleep,  
 Thou bearest angels to us in the night,  
 Saints out of heaven with palms. Seen by thy light  
 Sorrow is some old tale that goeth not deep ;  
 Love is a pouting child. Once I did sweep  
 Through space with thee, and lo, a dazzling sight—  
 Stars ! They came on, I felt their drawing and might ;  
 And some had dark companions. Once (I weep  
 When I remember that) we sailed the tide,  
 And found fair isles, where no isles used to bide,  
 And met there my lost love, who said to me,  
*That 'twas a long mistake: he had not died.*  
 Sleep, in the world to come how strange 't will be  
 Never to want, never to wish for thee !

---

## LOVE.

WHO veileth love should first have vanquished fate.  
 She folded up the dream in her deep heart,  
 Her fair full lips were silent on that smart,  
 Thick-fringèd eyes did on the grasses wait.  
 What good? one eloquent blush, but one, and straight  
 The meaning of a life was known; for art  
 Is often foiled in playing nature's part,  
 And time holds nothing long inviolate.  
 Earth's buried seed springs up—slowly, or fast :  
 The ring came home, that one in ages past  
 Flung to the keeping of unfathomed seas :  
 And golden apples on the mystic trees  
 Were sought and found, and borne away at last,  
 Though watched of the divine Hesperides.

## PROMISING.

*(A man speaks.)*

ONCE, a new world, the sun-swart marinere,  
 Columbus, promised, and was sore withstood,  
 Ungraced, unhelped, unheard for many a year ;  
 But let at last to make his promise good.  
 Promised and promising I go, most dear,  
 To better my dull heart with love's sweet feud,  
 My life with its most reverent hope and fear,  
 And my religion, with fair gratitude.



O we must part ; the stars for me contend,  
And all the winds that blow on all the seas.  
Through wonderful waste places I must wend,  
And with a promise my sad soul appease.  
Promise then, promise much of far-off bliss ;  
But—ah, for present joy, give me one kiss.

---

## COMFORT IN THE NIGHT.

SHE thought by heaven's high wall that she did stray  
Till she beheld the everlasting gate :  
And she climbed up to it to long, and wait,  
Feel with her hands (for it was night), and lay  
Her lips to it with kisses ; thus to pray  
That it might open to her desolate.  
And lo ! it trembled, lo ! her passionate  
Crying prevailed. A little little way  
It opened : there fell out a thread of light,  
And she saw wingèd wonders move within ;  
Also she heard sweet talking as they meant  
To comfort her. They said, ' Who comes to-night  
Shall one day certainly an entrance win ;'  
Then the gate closed and she awoke content.

---

## THOUGH ALL GREAT DEEDS.

THOUGH all great deeds were proved but fables fine,  
 Though earth's old story could be told anew,  
 Though the sweet fashions loved of them that sue  
 Were empty as the ruined Delphian shrine—  
 Though God did never man, in words benign,  
 With sense of His great Fatherhood endue,  
 Though life immortal were a dream untrue,  
 And He that promised it were not divine—  
 Though soul, though spirit were not, and all hope  
 Reaching beyond the bourne, melted away ;  
 Though virtue had no goal and good no scope,  
 But both were doomed to end with this our clay—  
 Though all these were not,—to the ungraced heir  
 Would this remain,—to live, as though they were.

## WISHING.

WHEN I reflect how little I have done,  
 And add to that how little I have seen,  
 Then furthermore how little I have won  
 Of joy, or good, how little known, or been :  
 I long for other life more full, more keen,  
 And yearn to change with such as well have run—  
 Yet reason mocks me—nay, the soul, I ween,  
 Granted her choice would dare to change with none ;

No,—not to feel, as Blondel when his lay  
 Pierced the strong tower, and Richard answered it—  
 No,—not to do, as Eustace on the day  
 He left fair Calais to her weeping fit—  
 No,—not to be Columbus, waked from sleep  
 When his new world rose from the charmed deep.

---

TO —.

STRANGE was the doom of Heracles, whose shade  
 Had dwelling in dim Hades the unblest,  
 While yet his form and presence sat a guest  
 With the old immortals when the feast was made.  
 Thine like, thus differs ; form and presence laid  
 In this dim chamber of enforced rest,  
 It is the unseen 'shade' which, risen, hath pressed  
 Above all heights where feet Olympian strayed.  
 My soul admires to hear thee speak ; thy thought  
 Falls from a high place like an August star,  
 Or some great eagle from his air-hung rings—  
 When swooping past a snow-cold mountain scar—  
 Down the steep slope of a long sunbeam brought.  
 He stirs the wheat with the steering of his wings.

## COMPENSATION.

ONE launched a ship, but she was wrecked at sea ;  
 He built a bridge, but floods have borne it down ;  
 He meant much good, none came : strange destiny,  
 His corn lies sunk, his bridge bears none to town,  
 Yet good he had not meant became his crown ;  
 For once at work, when even as nature free,  
 From thought of good he was, or of renown,  
 God took the work for good and let good be.  
 So wakened with a trembling after sleep,  
 Dread Mona Roa yields her fateful store ;  
 All gleaming hot the scarlet rivers creep,  
 And fanned of great-leaved palms slip to the shore,  
 Then stolen to unplumbed wastes of that far deep,  
 Lay the foundations for one island more.

## FANCY.

O FANCY, if thou flyest, come back anon,  
 Thy fluttering wings are soft as love's first word,  
 And fragrant as the feathers of that bird,  
 Which feeds upon the budded cinnamon.  
 I ask thee not to work, or sigh—play on,  
 From nought that was not, was, or is, deterred ;  
 The flax that Old Fate spun thy flights have stirred,  
 And waved memorial grass of Marathon.

Play, but be gentle, not as on that day  
I saw thee running down the rims of doom  
With stars thou hadst been stealing—while they lay  
Smothered in light and blue—clasped to thy breast ;  
Bring rather to me in the firelit room  
A netted halcyon bird to sing of rest.





*A STORY OF DOOM.*

BOOK I.

**N**ILOIYA said to Noah, 'What aileth thee,  
My master, unto whom is my desire.  
The father of my sons?' He answered  
her,

'Mother of many children, I have heard  
The Voice again.' 'Ah, me!' she saith, 'ah, me!  
What spake it?' and with that Niloiya sighed.

This when the Master-builder heard, his heart  
Was sad in him, the while he sat at home  
And rested after toil. The steady rap  
O' the shipwright's hammer sounding up the vale  
Did seem to mock him; but her distaff down  
Niloiya laid, and to the doorplace went,  
Parted the purple covering seemly hung  
Before it, and let in the crimson light  
Of the descending sun. Then looked he forth,—  
Looked, and beheld the hollow where the ark

Was a-preparing ; where the dew distilled  
 All night from leaves of old lign aloe trees,  
 Upon the gliding river ; where the palm,  
 The almug, and the gophir shot their heads  
 Into the crimson brede that dyed the world :  
 And lo ! he marked—unwieldy, dark, and huge—  
 The ship, his glory and his grief,—too vast  
 For that still river's floating,—building far  
 From mightier streams, amid the pastoral dells  
 Of shepherd kings.

Niloiya spake again :

‘ What said the Voice, thou well-belovèd man ? ’  
 He, labouring with his thought that troubled him,  
 Spoke on behalf of God : ‘ Behold,’ said he,  
 ‘ A little handful of unlovely dust  
 He fashioned to a lordly grace, and when  
 He laughed upon its beauty, it waxed warm,  
 And with His breath awoke a living soul.

‘ Shall not the Fashioner command His work ?  
 And who am I, that, if He whisper, “ Rise,  
 Go forth upon Mine errand,” should reply,  
 “ Lord God, I love the woman and her sons,—  
 I love not scorning : I beseech Thee, God,  
 Have me excused.” ’

She answered him, ‘ Tell on.’

And he continuing, reasoned with his soul :  
 ‘ What though I—like some goodly lama sunk



In meadow grass, eating her way at ease,  
Unseen of them that pass, and asking not  
A wider prospect than of yellow-flowers  
That nod above her head—should lay me down,  
And willingly forget this high behest,  
There should be yet no tarrying. Furthermore,  
Though I went forth to cry against the doom,  
Earth crieth louder, and she draws it down :  
It hangeth balanced over us ; she crieth,  
And it shall fall. O ! as for me, my life  
Is bitter, looking onward, for I know  
That in the fulness of the time shall dawn  
That day : my preaching shall not bring forth fruit,  
Though for its sake I leave thee. I shall float  
Upon the abhorrèd sea, that mankind hate,  
With thee and thine.'

She answered : ' God forbid !  
For, sir, though men be evil, yet the deep  
They dread, and at the last will surely turn  
To Him, and He long-suffering will forgive,  
And chide the waters back to their abyss,  
To cover the pits where doleful creatures feed.  
Sir, I am much afraid : I would not hear  
Of riding on the waters : look you, sir,  
Better it were to die with you by hand  
Of them that hate us, than to live, ah me !  
Rolling among the furrows of the unquiet,  
Unconsecrate, unfriendly, dreadful sea.'



He saith again : ' I pray thee, woman, peace,  
For thou wilt enter, when that day appears,  
The fateful ship.'

' My lord,' quoth she, ' I will.

But O, good sir, be sure of this, be sure  
The Master calleth ; for the time is long  
That thou hast warned the world : thou art but  
here

Three days ; the song of welcoming but now  
Is ended. I behold thee, I am glad ;  
And wilt thou go again? Husband, I say,  
Be sure who 't is that calleth ; O, be sure,  
Be sure. My mother's ghost came up last night,  
Whilst I thy beard, held in my hands, did kiss,  
Leaning anear thee, wakeful through my love,  
And watchful of thee till the moon went down.

' She never loved me since I went with thee  
To sacrifice among the hills : she smelt  
The holy smoke, and could no more divine  
Till the new moon. I saw her ghost come up ;  
It had a snake with a red comb of fire  
Twisted about its waist—the doggish head  
Lolled on its shoulder, and so leered at me.  
" This woman might be wiser," quoth the ghost ;  
" Shall there be husbands for her found below,  
When she comes down to us? O, fool ! O, fool !  
She must not let her man go forth, to leave

Her desolate, and reap the whole world's scorn,  
A harvest for himself." With that they passed.'

He said, 'My crystal drop of perfectness,  
I pity thee ; it was an evil ghost :  
'Thou wilt not heed the counsel?' 'I will not,'  
Quoth she ; 'I am loyal to the Highest. Him  
I hold by even as thou, and deem Him best.  
Sir, am I fairer than when last we met?'

'God add,' said he, 'unto thy much yet more,  
As I do think thou art.' 'And think you, sir,'  
Niloiya saith, 'that I have reached the prime?'  
He answering, 'Nay, not yet.' 'I would 't were so,'  
She plaineth, 'for the daughters mock at me :  
Her locks forbear to grow, they say, so sore  
She pineth for the master. Look you, sir,  
They reach but to the knee. But thou art come,  
And all goes merrier. Eat, my lord, of all  
My supper that I set, and afterward  
Tell me, I pray thee, somewhat of thy way ;  
Else shall I be despised as Adam was,  
Who compassed not the learning of his sons,  
But, grave and silent, oft would lower his head  
And ponder, following of great Isha's feet,  
When she would walk with her fair brow upraised,  
Scorning the children that she bare to him.'

‘Ay,’ quoth the Master ; ‘but they did amiss  
When they despised their father : knowest thou that ?’

‘Sure he was foolisher,’ Niloiya saith,  
‘Than any that came after. Furthermore,  
He had not heart nor courage for to rule :  
He let the mastery fall from his slack hand.  
Had not our glorious mother still borne up  
His weakness, chid with him, and sat apart,  
And listened, when the fit came over him  
To talk on his lost garden, he had sunk  
Into the slave of slaves.’

‘Nay, thou must think  
How he had dwelt long, God’s loved husbandman,  
And looked in hope among the tribes for one  
To be his fellow, ere great Isha, once  
Waking, he found at his left side, and knew  
The deep delight of speech.’ So Noah, and thus  
Added, ‘And therefore was his loss the more ;  
For though the creatures he had singled out  
His favourites, dared for him the fiery sword  
And followed after him,—shall bleat of lamb  
Console one for the foregone talk of God ?  
Or in the afternoon, his faithful dog,  
Fawning upon him, make his heart forget  
At such a time, and such a time, to have heard  
What he shall hear no more ?’

O, as for him.

It was for this that he full oft would stop,  
And, lost in thought, stand and revolve that deed,  
Sad muttering, "Woman ! we reproach thee not ;  
Though thou didst eat mine immortality ;  
Earth, be not sorry ; I was free to choose."  
Wonder not, therefore, if he walked forlorn.  
Was not the helpmeet given to raise him up  
From his contentment with the lower things ?  
Was she not somewhat that he could not rule  
Beyond the action, that he could not have  
By the mere holding, and that still aspired  
And drew him after her ? So, when deceived  
She fell by great desire to rise, he fell  
By loss of upward drawing, when she took  
An evil tongue to be her counsellor :  
"Death is not as the death of lower things,  
Rather a glorious change, begrudged of Heaven,  
A change to being as gods"—he from her hand,  
Upon reflection, took of death that hour,  
And ate it (not the death that she had dared)  
He ate it knowing. Then divisions came.  
She, like a spirit strayed who lost the way,  
Too venturesome, among the further stars,  
And hardly cares, because it hardly hopes  
To find the path to heaven ; in bitter wise  
Did bear to him degenerate seed, and he,  
Once having felt her upward drawing, longed,

And yet aspired, and yearned to be restored,  
Albeit she drew no more.'

'Sir, ye speak well,'

Niloiya saith, 'but yet the mother sits  
Higher than Adam. He did understand  
Discourse of birds and all four-footed things,  
But she had knowledge of the many tribes  
Of angels and their tongues; their playful ways  
And greetings when they met. Was she not wise?  
They say she knew much that she never told,  
And had a voice that called to her as thou.'

'Nay,' quoth the Master-shipwright, 'who am I  
That I should answer? As for me, poor man,  
Here is my trouble: "if there be a Voice,"  
At first I cried, "let me behold the mouth  
That uttereth it." Thereon it held its peace.  
But afterward, I, journeying up the hills,  
Did hear it hollower than an echo fallen  
Across some clear abyss; and I did stop,  
And ask of all my company, "What cheer?  
If there be spirits abroad that call to us,  
Sirs, hold your peace and hear." So they gave heed,  
And one man said, "It is the small ground-doves  
That peck upon the stony hillocks;" one,  
"It is the mammoth in yon cedar swamp  
That cheweth in his dream;" and one, "My lord,  
It is the ghost of him that yesternight

We slew, because he grudged to yield his wife  
 To thy great father, when he peaceably  
 Did send to take her." Then I answered, " Pass,"  
 And they went on ; and I did lay mine ear  
 Close to the earth ; but there came up therefrom  
 No sound, nor any speech ; I waited long,  
 And in the saying, " I will mount my beast  
 And on," I was as one that in a trance  
 Beholdeth what is coming, and I saw  
 Great waters and a ship ; and somewhat spake  
 " Lo, this shall be ; let him that heareth it  
 And seeth it, go forth to warn his kind,  
 For I will drown the world."

Niloiya saith,

' Sir, was that all that ye went forth upon ?'  
 The master, he replieth, ' Ay,' at first,  
 ' That same was all ; but many days went by,  
 While I did reason with my heart and hope  
 For more, and struggle to remain, and think,  
 " Let me be certain ;" and so think again,  
 " The counsel is but dark ; would I had more !  
 When I have more to guide me, I will go."  
 And afterward, when reasoned on too much,  
 It seemed remoter, then I only said,  
 " O, would I had the same again ;" and still  
 I had it not.

Then at the last I cried,  
 " If the unseen be silent, I will speak

And certify my meaning to myself.  
Say that He spoke, then He will make that good  
Which He hath spoken. Therefore it were best  
To go, and do His bidding. All the earth  
Shall hear the judgment so, and none may cry  
When the doom falls, 'Thou, God, art hard on us ;  
We knew not Thou wert angry. O ! we are lost,  
Only for lack of being warned.'

But say  
That He spoke not, and merely it befell  
That I being weary had a dream. Why, so  
He could not suffer damage ; when the time  
Was past, and that I threatened had not come,  
Men would cry out on me, haply me kill,  
For troubling their content. They would not swear,  
'God, that did send this man, is proved untrue,'  
But rather, 'Let him die ; he lied to us ;  
God never sent him.' Only Thou, great King,  
Knowest if Thou didst speak or no. I leave  
The matter here. If Thou wilt speak again,  
I go in gladness ; if Thou wilt not speak,  
Nay, if Thou never didst, I not the less  
Shall go, because I have believed, what time  
I seemed to hear Thee, and thie going stands  
Witn memory of believing." Then I washed,  
And did array me in the sacred gown,  
And take a lamb.'

'Ay, sir,' Niloiya sighed,



‘ I following, and I knew not anything  
Till, the young lamb asleep in thy two arms,  
We, moving up among the silent hills,  
Paused in a grove to rest ; and many slaves  
Came near to make obeisance, and to bring  
Wood for the sacrifice, and turf and fire.  
Then in their hearing thou didst say to me,  
“ Behold, I know thy good fidelity,  
And theirs that are about us ; they would guard  
The mountain passes, if it were my will  
Awhile to leave thee ; ” and the pigmies laughed  
For joy, that thou wouldst trust inferior things ;  
And put their heads down, as their manner is,  
To touch our feet. They laughed, but sore I wept ;  
Sir, I could weep now ; ye did ill to go  
If that was all your bidding ; I had thought  
God drave thee, and thou couldst not choose but go.’

Then said the son of Lamech, ‘ Afterward,  
When I had left thee, He whom I had served  
Met with me in the visions of the night,  
To comfort me for that I had withdrawn  
From thy dear company. He sware to me  
That no man should molest thee, no, nor touch  
The bordering of mine outmost field. I say,  
When I obeyed, He made His matters plain.  
With whom could I have left thee, but with them ;  
Born in thy mother’s house, and bound thy slaves ? ’



She said, 'I love not pigmies; they are naught.'  
 And he, 'Who made them pigmies?' Then she pushed  
 Her veiling hair back from her round, soft eyes,  
 And answered, wondering, 'Sir, my mothers did;  
 Ye know it.' And he drew her near to sit  
 Beside him on the settle, answering, 'Ay.'  
 And they went on to talk as writ below,  
 If anyone shall read:

'Thy mother did,  
 And they that went before her. Thinkest thou  
 That they did well?'

'They had been overcome;  
 And when the angered conquerors drave them out,  
 Behoved them find some other way to rule,  
 They did but use their wits. Hath not man aye  
 Been cunning in dominion, among beasts  
 To breed for size or swiftness, or for sake  
 Of the white wool he loveth, at his choice?  
 What harm if coveting a race of men  
 That could but serve, they sought among their thralls,  
 Such as were low of stature, men and maids;  
 Ay, and of feeble will and quiet mind?  
 Did they not spend much gear to gather out  
 Such as I tell of, and for matching them  
 One with another for a thousand years?  
 What harm, then, if there came of it a race,  
 Inferior in their wits, and in their size,  
 And well content to serve?'

“What harm?” thou sayest.  
My wife doth ask, “What harm?”

‘Your pardon, sir.

I do remember that there came one day,  
Two of the grave old angels that God made  
When first He invented life (right old were they,  
And plain, and venerable); and they said,  
Rebuking of my mother as with hers  
She sat, “Ye do not well, you wives of men,  
To match your wit against the Maker’s will,  
And for your benefit to lower the stamp  
Of His fair image, which He set at first  
Upon man’s goodly frame; ye do not well  
To treat His likeness even as ye treat  
The bird and beast that perish.”

‘Said they aught  
To appease the ancients, or to speak them fair?’

‘How know I? ’T was a slave that told it me.  
My mother was full old when I was born,  
And that was in her youth. What think you, sir?  
Did not the giants likewise ill?’

‘To that

I have no answer ready. If a man,  
When each one is against his fellow, rule,  
Or unmolested dwell, or unreprieved,  
Because, for size and strength, he standeth first,  
He will thereof be glad; and if he say,

“I will to wife choose me a stately maid,  
And leave a goodly offspring ;” ’sooth, I think,  
He sinneth not ; for good to him and his  
He would be strong and great. Thy people’s fault  
Was, that for ill to others, they did plot  
To make them weak and small.’

‘ But yet they steal  
Or take in war the strongest maids, and such  
As are of highest stature ; ay, and oft  
They fight among themselves for that same cause.  
And they are proud against the King of heaven :  
They hope in course of ages they shall come  
To be as strong as He.’

The Master said,  
‘ I will not hear thee talk thereof ; my heart  
Is sick for all this wicked world. Fair wife,  
I am right weary. Call thy slaves to thee,  
And bid that they prepare the sleeping place.  
O would that I might rest ! I fain would rest,  
And no more, wandering, tell a thankless world  
My never-heeded tale !’

With that she called.  
The moon was up, and some few stars were out,  
While heavy at the heart he walked abroad  
To meditate before his sleep. And yet  
Niloiya pondered, ‘ Shall my master go ?  
And will my master go ? What ’vaileth it,  
That he doth spend himself, over the waste

A-wandering, till he reach outlandish folk,  
That mock his warning? O, what 'vaileth it,  
That he doth lavish wealth to build yon ark,  
Whereat the daughters, when they eat with me,  
Laugh? O my heart! I would the Voice were stilled  
Is not he happy? Who, of all the earth,  
Obeyeth like to me? Have not I learned  
From his dear mouth to utter seemly words,  
And lay the powers my mother gave me by?  
Have I made offerings to the dragon? Nay.  
And I am faithful, when he leaveth me  
Lonely betwixt the peakèd mountain tops  
In this long valley, where no stranger foot  
Can come without my will. He shall not go.  
Not yet, not yet! But three days—only three—  
Beside me, and a-muttering on the third,  
“I have heard the Voice again.” Be dull, O dull,  
Mind and remembrance! Mother, ye did ill;  
'T is hard unlawful knowledge not to use.  
Why, O dark mother! opened ye the way?  
Yet when he entered, and did lay aside  
His costly robe of sacrifice, the robe  
Wherein he had been offering, ere the sun  
Went down; forgetful of her mother's craft,  
She lovely and submiss did mourn to him:  
'Thou wilt not go—I pray thee, do not go,  
Till thou hast seen thy children.' And he said,  
'I will not. I have cried, and have prevailed:

To-morrow it is given me by the Voice  
Upon a four days' journey to proceed,  
And follow down the river, till its waves  
Are swallowed in the sand, where no flesh dwells.

‘“There,” quoth the Unrevealed, “we shall meet,  
And I will counsel thee ; and thou shalt turn  
And rest thee with the mother, and with them  
She bare.” Now, therefore, when the morn appears,  
Thou fairest among women, call thy slaves,  
And bid them yoke the steers, and spread thy car  
With robes, the choicest work of cunning hands ;  
Array thee in thy rich apparel, deck  
Thy locks with gold ; and while the hollow vale  
I thread beside yon river, go thou forth  
Atween the mountains to my father’s house,  
And let thy slaves make all obeisance due,  
And take and lay an offering at his feet.  
Then light, and cry to him, “Great king, the son  
Of old Methuselah, thy son hath sent  
To fetch the growing maids, his children, home.”’

‘Sir,’ quoth the woman, ‘I will do this thing,  
So thou keep faith with me, and yet return.  
But will the Voice, think you, forbear to chide,  
Nor that Unseen, who calleth, buffet thee,  
And drive thee on?’

He saith, ‘It will keep faith.

Fear not. I have prevailed, for I besought,  
And lovingly it answered. I shall rest,  
And dwell with thee till after my three sons  
Come from the chase.' She said, 'I let them forth  
In fear, for they are young. Their slaves are few.  
The giant elephants be cunning folk ;  
They lie in ambush, and will draw men on  
To follow—then will turn and tread them down.'  
'Thy father's house unwisely planned,' said he,  
'To drive them down upon the growing corn  
Of them that were their foes ; for now, behold,  
They suffer while the unwieldy beasts delay  
Retirement to their lands, and, meanwhile, pound  
The damp, deep meadows, to a pulpy mash ;  
Or wallowing in the waters foul them ; nay,  
Tread down the banks, and let them forth to flood  
Their cities ; or, assailed and falling, shake  
The walls, and taint the wind, ere thirty men,  
Over the hairy terror piling stones  
Or earth, prevail to cover it.'

She said,  
'Husband, I have been sorry, thinking oft  
I would my sons were home ; but now so well  
Methinks it is with me, that I am fain  
To wish they might delay, for thou wilt dwell  
With me till after they return, and thou  
Hast set thine eyes upon them. Then—ah, me !  
I must sit joyless in my place ; bereft,

As trees that suddenly have dropped their leaves,  
And dark as nights that have no moon.'

She spake :

The hope o' the world did hearken, but reply  
Made none. He left his hand on her fair locks  
As she lay sobbing ; and the quietness  
Of night began to comfort her, the fall  
Of far-off waters, and the wingèd wind  
That went among the trees. The patient hand,  
Moreover, that was steady, wrought with her,  
Until she said, 'What wilt thou? Nay, I know.  
I therefore answer what thou utterest not.

*Thou lovest me well, and not for thine own will  
Consentest to depart. What more? Ay, this :  
I do avow that He which calleth thee,  
Hath right to call ; and I do swear, the Voice  
Shall have no let of me, to do Its will.'*



## BOOK II.

Now ere the sunrise, while the morning star  
Hung yet behind the pine bough, woke and prayed  
The world's great shipwright, and his soul was glad  
Because the Voice was favourable. Now  
Began the tap o' the hammer, now ran forth  
The slaves preparing food. They therefore ate  
In peace together ; then Niloiya forth  
Behind the milk-white steers went on her way ;  
And the great Master-builder, down the course  
Of the long river, on his errand sped,  
And as he went, he thought :

[They do not well  
Who, walking up a trodden path, all smooth  
With footsteps of their fellows, and made straight  
From town to town, will scorn at them that wonn  
Under the covert of God's eldest trees  
(Such as He planted with His hand, and fed  
With dew before rain fell, till they stood close  
And awful ; drank the light up as it dropped,  
And kept the dusk of ages at their roots) ;  
They do not well who mock at such, and cry,



‘We peaceably, without or fault or fear,  
Proceed, and miss not of our end ; but these  
Are slow and fearful : with uncertain pace,  
And ever reasoning of the way, they oft,  
After all reasoning, choose the worser course,  
And plunged in swamp, or in the matted growth  
Nigh smothered struggle, all to reach a goal  
Not worth their pains.’ Nor do they well whose work  
Is still to feed and shelter them and theirs,  
Get gain, and gathered store it, to think scorn  
Of those who work for a world (no wages paid  
By a Master hid in light), and sent alone  
To face a laughing multitude, whose eyes  
Are full of damaging pity, that forbears  
To tell the harmless labourer, ‘Thou art mad.’]

And as he went, he thought : ‘They counsel me,  
Ay, with a kind of reason in their talk,  
“Consider ; call thy soberer thought to aid ;  
Why to but one man should a message come ?  
And why, if but to one, to thee ? Art thou  
Above us, greater, wiser ? Had He sent,  
He had willed that we should heed. Then since He  
knoweth  
That such as thou, a wise man cannot heed,  
He did not send.” My answer, “Great and wise,  
If He had sent with thunder, and a voice  
Leaping from heaven, ye must have heard ; but so

Ye had been robbed of choice, and, like the beasts,  
Yoked to obedience. God makes no men slaves.”  
They tell me, “God is great above thy thought :  
He meddles not ; and this small world is ours,  
These many hundred years we govern it ;  
Old Adam, after Eden, saw Him not.”  
Then I, “It may be He is gone to knead  
More clay. But look, my masters ; one of you  
Going to warfare, layeth up his gown,  
His sickle, or his gold, and thinks no more  
Upon it, till young trees have waxen great ;  
At last, when he returneth he will seek  
His own. And God, shall He not do the like ?  
And having set new worlds a-rolling, come  
And say, ‘I will betake Me to the earth  
That I did make :’ and having found it vile,  
Be sorry ? Why should man be free, you wise,  
And not the Master ?” Then they answer, “Fool !  
A man shall cast a stone into the air  
For pastime, or for lack of heed,—but He !  
Will He come fingering of His ended work,  
Fright it with His approaching face, or snatch  
One day the rolling wonder from its ring,  
And hold it quivering, as a wanton child  
Might take a nestling from its downy bed,  
And having satisfied a careless wish,  
Go thrust it back into its place again ?  
To such I answer, and, that doubt once mine,

I am assured that I do speak aright :  
 “Sirs, the significance of this your doubt  
 Lies in the reason of it ; ye do grudge  
 That these your lands should have another Lord ;  
 Ye are not loyal, therefore ye would fain  
 Your King would bide afar. But if ye looked  
 For countenance and favour when He came,  
 Knowing yourselves right worthy, would ye care,  
 With cautious reasoning, deep and hard, to prove  
 That He would never come, and would your wrath  
 Be hot against a prophet ? Nay, I wot  
 That as a flatterer you would look on him,—  
 ‘ Full of sweet words thy mouth is : if He come—  
 We think not that He will—but if He come,  
 Would it might be to-morrow, or to-night,  
 Because we look for praise.’ ”

Now, as he went,  
 The noontide heats came on, and he grew faint ;  
 But while he sat below an almug tree,  
 A slave approached with greeting. ‘ Master, hail !’  
 He answered, ‘ Hail ! what wilt thou ?’ Then she said,  
 ‘ The palace of thy fathers standeth nigh.’  
 ‘ I know it,’ quoth he ; and she said again,  
 ‘ The Elder, learning thou wouldst pass, hath sent  
 To fetch thee ;’ then he rose and followed her.  
 So first they walked beneath a lofty roof  
 Of living bough and tendril, woven on high  
 To let no drop of sunshine through, and hung

With gold and purple fruitage, and the white  
Thick cups of scented blossom. Underneath,  
Soft grew the sward and delicate, and flocks  
Of egrets, aye, and many cranes, stood up,  
Fanning their wings, to agitate and cool  
The noonday air, as men with heed and pains  
Had taught them, marshalling and taming them  
To bear the wind in, on their moving wings.

So long time as a nimble slave would spend  
In milking of her cow, they walked at ease ;  
Then reached the palace, all of forest trunks,  
Brought whole, and set together, made. Therein  
Had dwelt old Adam, when his mighty sons  
Had finished it, and up to Eden gate  
Had journeyed for to fetch him. ' Here,' they said,  
' Mother and father, ye may dwell, and here  
Forget the garden wholly.'

So he came  
Under the doorplace, and the women sat,  
Each with her finger on her lips ; but he,  
Having been called, went on, until he reached  
The jewelled settle, wrought with cunning work  
Of gold and ivory, whereon they went  
To set the Elder. All with sleekest skins,  
That striped and spotted creatures of the wood  
Had worn, the seat was covered, but thereon  
The Elder was not ; by the steps thereof,

Upon the floor, whereto his silver beard  
Did reach, he sat, and he was in his trance.  
Upon the settle many doves were perched,  
That set the air a-going with their wings :  
These opposite, the world's great shipwright stood  
To wait the burden ; and the Elder spake :  
' Will He forget me? Would He might forget !  
Old, old ! The hope of old Methuselah  
Is all in His forgetfulness.' With that,  
A slave-girl took a cup of wine, and crept  
Anear him, saying, ' Taste ; ' and when his lips  
Had touched it, lo, he trembled, and he cried,  
' Behold, I prophesy.'

Then straight they fled  
That were about him, and did stand apart  
And stop their ears. For he, from time to time,  
Was plagued with that same fate to prophesy,  
And spake against himself, against his day  
And time, in words that all men did abhor.  
Therefore, he warning them what time the fit  
Came on him, saved them, that they heard it not.  
So while they fled, he cried : ' I saw the God  
Reach out of heaven His wonderful right hand.  
Lo, lo ! He dipped it in the unquiet sea,  
And in its curvèd palm behold the ark,  
As in a vast calm lake, came floating on.  
Ay, then, His other hand—the cursing hand—  
He took and spread between us and the sun,

And all was black ; the day was blotted out,  
And horrible staggering took the frightened earth.  
I heard the water hiss, and then methinks  
The crack as of her splitting. Did she take  
Their palaces that are my brothers dear,  
And huddle them with all their ancientry  
Under into her breast? If it was black,  
How could this old man see? There was a noise  
I' the dark, and He drew back His hand again.  
I looked——It was a dream,—let no man say  
It was aught else. There, so—the fit goes by.  
Sir, and my daughters, is it eventide?—  
Sooner than that, saith old Methuselah,  
Let the vulture lay his beak to my green limbs.  
What! art Thou envious?—are the sons of men  
Too wise to please Thee, and to do Thy will?  
Methuselah, he sitteth on the ground,  
Clad in his gown of age, the pale white gown,  
And goeth not forth to war; his wrinkled hands  
He claspeth round his knees: old, very old.  
Would he could steal from Thee one secret more—  
The secret of Thy youth! O, envious God!  
We die. The words of old Methuselah  
And his prophecy are ended.'

Then the wives,  
Beholding how he trembled, and the maids  
And children, came anear, saying, 'Who art thou  
That standest gazing on the Elder? Lo,



Thou dost not well : withdraw ; for it was thou  
Whose stranger presence troubled him, and brought  
The fit of prophecy.' And he did turn  
To look upon them, and their majesty  
And glorious beauty took away his words  
And being pure among the vile, he cast  
In his thought a veil of snow-white purity  
Over the beauteous throng. 'Thou dost not well,'  
'They said. He answered : ' Blossoms o' the world,  
Fruitful as fair, never in watered glade,  
Where in the youngest grass blue cups push forth,  
And the white lily reareth up her head,  
And purples cluster, and the saffron flower  
Clear as a flame of sacrifice breaks out,  
And every cedar bough, made delicate  
With climbing roses, drops in white and red,—  
Saw I (good angels keep you in their care)  
So beautiful a crowd.'

With that, they stamped,  
Gnashed their white teeth, and turning, fled and spat  
Upon the floor. The Elder spake to him,  
Yet shaking with the burden, 'Who art thou?'  
He answered, 'I, the man whom thou didst send  
To fetch through this thy woodland, do forbear  
To tell my name ; thou lovest it not, great sire,—  
No, nor mine errand. To thy house I spake,  
Touching their beauty.' 'Wherefore didst thou spite,'  
Quoth he, 'the daughters?' and it seemed he lost,

Count of that prophecy, for very age,  
And from his thin lips dropped a trembling laugh.  
'Wicked old man,' quoth he, 'this wise old man  
I see as 't were not I. Thou bad old man,  
What shall be done to thee? for thou didst burn  
Their babes, and strew the ashes all about,  
To rid the world of His white soldiers. Ay,  
Scenting of human sacrifice, they fled.  
Cowards! I heard them winnow their great wings :  
They went to tell Him ; but they came no more.  
The women hate to hear of them, so sore  
They grudged their little ones ; and yet no way  
There was but that. I took it ; I did well.'

With that he fell to weeping. 'Son,' said he,  
'Long have I hid mine eyes from stalwart men,  
For it is hard to lose the majesty  
And pride and power of manhood : but to-day,  
Stand forth into the light, that I may look  
Upon thy strength, and think, Even thus did I,  
In the glory of my youth, more like to God  
Than like His soldiers, face the vassal world.'

Then Noah stood forward in his majesty,  
Shouldering the golden billhook, wherewithal  
He wont to cut his way, when tangled in  
The matted hayes. And down the opened roof  
Fell slanting beams upon his stately head,  
And streamed along his gown, and made to shine



The jewelled sandals on his feet.

And, lo,

The Elder cried aloud : ' I prophesy.

Behold, my son is as a fruitful field

When all the lands are waste. The archers drew—

They drew the bow against him ; they were fain

To slay : but he shall live—my son shall live,

And I shall live by him in the other days.

Behold the prophet of the Most High God :

Hear him. Behold the hope o' the world, what time

She lieth under. Hear him ; he shall save

A seed alive, and sow the earth with man.

O, earth ! earth ! earth ! a floating shell of wood

Shall hold the remnant of thy mighty lords.

Will this old man be in it? Sir, and you

My daughters, hear him ! Lo, this white old man

He sitteth on the ground. (Let be, let be :

Why dost Thou trouble us to make our tongue

Ring with abhorrèd words?) The prophecy

Of the Elder, and the vision that he saw,

They both are ended.'

Then said Noah : ' The life

Of this my lord is low for very age :

Why then, with bitter words upon thy tongue,

Father of Lamech, dost thou anger Him ?

Thou canst not strive against Him now.' He said :

' Thy feet are toward the valley, where lie bones

Bleaching upon the desert. Did I love

The lithe strong lizards that I yoked and set  
To draw my car? and were they not Possessed?  
Yea, all of them were liars. I loved them well.  
What did the Enemy, but on a day  
When I behind my talking team went forth,  
They sweetly lying, so that all men praised  
Their flattering tongues and mild persuasive eyes—  
What did the Enemy but send His slaves,  
Angels, to cast down stones upon their heads  
And break them? Nay, I could not stir abroad  
But havoc came ; they never crept or flew  
Beyond the shelter that I builded here,  
But straight the crowns I had set upon their heads  
Were marks for myrmidons that in the clouds  
Kept watch to crush them. Can a man forgive  
That hath been warred on thus? I will not. Nay,  
I swear it—I, the man Methuselah.’  
The Master-shipwright, he replied, ‘T is true,  
Great loss was that ; but they that stood thy friends,  
The wicked spirits, spoke upon their tongues,  
And cursed the God of heaven. What marvel, sir,  
If He was angered?’ But the Elder cried,  
‘They all are dead—the toward beasts I loved ;  
My goodly team, my joy, they all are dead ;  
Their bones lie bleaching in the wilderness :  
And I will keep my wrath for evermore  
Against the Enemy that slew them. Go,  
Thou coward servant of a tyrant King,

Go down the desert of the bones, and ask,  
 " My King, what bones are these? Methuselah,  
 The white old man that sitteth on the ground,  
 Sendeth a message, ' Bid them that they live,  
 And let my lizards run up every path  
 They wont to take when out of silver pipes,  
 The pipes that Tubal wrought into my roof,  
 I blew a sweeter cry than song-bird's throat  
 Hath ever formed ; and while they laid their heads  
 Submiss upon my threshold, poured away  
 Music that welled by heartfuls out, and made  
 The throats of men that heard to swell, their breasts  
 To heave with the joy of grief ; yea, caused the lips  
 To laugh of men asleep.

Return to me

The great wise lizards ; aye, and them that flew  
 My pursuivants before me. Let me yoke  
 Again that multitude ; and here I swear  
 That they shall draw my car and me thereon  
 Straight to the ship of doom. So men shall know  
 My loyalty, that I submit, and Thou  
 Shalt yet have honour, O mine Enemy,  
 By me. ' The speech of old Methuselah.' "

Then Noah made answer, ' By the living God,  
 That is no enemy to men, great sire,  
 I will not take thy message ; hear thou Him.  
 " Behold ( He saith that suffereth thee), behold,

The earth that I made green cries out to Me,  
 Red with the costly blood of beauteous man.  
 I am robbed, I am robbed (He saith) ; they sacrifice  
 To evil demons of My blameless flocks,  
 That I did fashion with My hand. Behold,  
 How goodly was the world ! I gave it thee  
 Fresh from its finishing. What hast thou done ?  
 I will cry out to the waters, *Cover it,*  
*And hide it from its Father. Lo, Mine eyes*  
*Turn from it shamed."*

With that the old man laughed  
 Full softly. 'Ay,' quoth he, 'a goodly world,  
 And we have done with it as we did list.  
 Why did He give it us? Nay, look you, son :  
 Five score they were that died in yonder waste ;  
 And if He crieth, "Repent, be reconciled,"  
 I answer, "Nay, my lizards ;" and again,  
 If He will trouble me in this mine age,  
 "Why hast Thou slain my lizards?" Now my speech  
 Is cut away from all my other words,  
 Standing alone. The Elder sweareth it,  
 The man of many days, Methuselah.'

Then answered Noah, 'My Master, hear it not ;  
 But yet have patience ;' and he turned himself,  
 And down betwixt the ordered trees went forth,  
 And in the light of evening made his way  
 Into the waste to meet the Voice of God.

## BOOK III.

ABOVE the head of great Methuselah  
There lay two demons in the opened roof  
Invisible, and gathered up his words ;  
For when the Elder prophesied, it came  
About, that hidden things were shown to them,  
And burdens that he spake against his time.

(But never heard them, such as dwelt with him ;  
Their ears they stopped, and willed to live at ease  
In all delight ; and perfect in their youth,  
And strong, disport them in the perfect world.)

Now these were fettered that they could not fly,  
For a certain disobedience they had wrought  
Against the ruler of their host ; but not  
The less they loved their cause ; and when the feet  
O' the Master-builder were no longer heard,  
They, slipping to the sward, right painfully  
Did follow, for the one to the other said,  
' Behoves our master know of this ; and us,  
Should he be favourable, he may loose  
From these our bonds.'

And thus it came to pass,  
That while at dead of night the old dragon lay  
Coiled in the cavern where he dwelt, the watch  
Pacing before it saw in middle air  
A boat, that gleamed like fire, and on it came,  
And rocked as it drew near, and then it burst  
And went to pieces, and there fell therefrom,  
Close at the cavern's mouth, two glowing balls.

Now there was drawn a curtain nigh the mouth  
Of that deep cave, to testify of wrath.  
The dragon had been wroth with some that served,  
And chased them from him; and his oracles,  
That wont to drop from him, were stopped, and men  
Might only pray to him through that fell web  
That hung before him. Then did whisper low  
Some of the little spirits that bat-like clung  
And cluster'd round the opening. 'Lo,' they said,  
While gazed the watch upon those glowing balls,  
'These are like moons eclipsed; but let them lie  
Red on the moss, and sear its dewy spires,  
Until our lord give leave to draw the web,  
And quicken reverence by his presence dread,  
For he will know and call to them by name,  
And they will change. At present he is sick,  
And wills that none disturb him.' So they lay,  
And there was silence, for the forest tribes  
Came never near that cave. Wiser than men.

They fled the serpent hiss that oft by night  
Came forth of it, and feared the wan dusk forms  
That stalked among the trees, and in the dark  
Those whiffs of flame that wandered up the sky  
And made the moonlight sickly.

Now, the cave  
Was marvellous for beauty, wrought with tools  
Into the living rock, for there had worked  
All cunning men, to cut on it with signs  
And shows, yea, all the manner of mankind.  
The fateful apple-tree was there, a bough  
Bent with the weight of him that us beguiled ;  
And lilies of the field did seem to blow  
And bud in the storied stone. There Tubal sat,  
Who from his harp delivered music, sweet  
As any in the spheres. Yea, more ;  
Earth's latest wonder on the walls appeared,  
Unfinished, workmen clustering on its ribs ;  
And farther back, within the rock hewn out,  
Angelic figures stood, that impious hands  
Had fashioned ; many golden lamps they held  
By golden chains depending, and their eyes  
All tended in a reverend quietude  
Towards the couch whereon the dragon lay.  
The floor was beaten gold ; the curly lengths  
Of his last coils lay on it, hid from sight  
With a coverlet made stiff with crusting gems,  
Fire opals shooting, rubies, fierce bright eyes



Of diamonds, or the pale green emerald,  
That changed their lustre when he breathed.

His head

Feathered with crimson combs, and all his neck,  
And half-shut fans of his admirèd wings,  
That in their scaly splendour put to shame  
Or gold or stone, lay on his ivory couch  
And shivered ; for the dragon suffered pain :  
He suffered and he feared. It was his doom,  
The tempter, that he never should depart  
From the bright creature that in Paradise  
He for his evil purpose erst possessed,  
Until it died. Thus only, spirit of might  
And chiefest spirit of ill, could he be free.

But with its nature wed, as souls of men  
Are wedded to their clay, he took the dread  
Of death and dying, and the coward heart  
Of the beast, and craven terrors of the end  
Sank him that habited within it to dread  
Disunion. He, a dark dominion erst  
Rebellious, lay and trembled, for the flesh  
Daunted his immaterial. He was sick  
And sorry. Great ones of the earth had sent  
Their chief musicians for to comfort him,  
Chanting his praise, the friend of man, the god  
That gave them knowledge, at so great a price  
And costly. Yea, the riches of the mine,



And glorious broidered work, and woven gold,  
And all things wisely made, they at his feet  
Laid daily ; for they said, ' This mighty one,  
All the world wonders after him. He lieth  
Sick in his dwelling ; he hath long foregone  
(To do us good) dominion, and a throne,  
And his brave warfare with the Enemy,  
So much he pitieth us that were denied  
The gain and gladness of this knowledge. Now  
Shall he be certified of gratitude,  
And smell the sacrifice that most he loves.'

The night was dark, but every lamp gave forth  
A tender, lustrous beam. His beauteous wings  
The dragon fluttered, cursed awhile, then turned  
And moaned with lamentable voice, ' I thirst,  
Give me to drink.' Thereon stepped out in haste,  
From inner chambers, lovely ministrants,  
Young boys with radiant locks and peaceful eyes,  
And poured out liquor from their cups, to cool  
His parchèd tongue, and kneeling held it nigh  
In jewelled basins sparkling ; and he lapped,  
And was appeased, and said, ' I will not hide  
Longer, my much desirèd face from men.  
Draw back the web of separation.' Then  
With cries of gratulation ran they forth,  
And flung it wide, and all the watch fell low,  
Each on his face, as drunk with sudden joy.

Thus marked he, glowing on the branched moss,  
Those red rare moons, and let his serpent eyes  
Consider them full subtly, 'What be these?'  
Enquiring : and the little spirits said,  
'As we for thy protection (having heard  
That wrathful sons of darkness walk to-night,  
Such as do oft ill use us), clustered here,  
We marked a boat a-fire, that sailed the skies,  
And furrowed up like spray a billowy cloud,  
And, lo, it went to pieces, scattering down  
A rain of sparks and these two angry moons.'  
Then said the dragon, 'Let my guard, and you,  
Attendant hosts, recede ;' and they went back,  
And formed about the cave a widening ring,  
Then halting, stood afar ; and from the cave  
The snaky wonder spoke, with hissing tongue,  
'If ye were Tartis and Deleisonon,  
Be Tartis and Deleisonon once more.'

Then egg-like cracked the glowing balls, and forth  
Started black angels, trampling hard to free  
Their fettered feet from out the smoking shell.

And he said, 'Tartis and Deleisonon,  
Your lord I am : draw nigh.' 'Thou art our lord,  
They answered, and with fettered limbs full low  
They bent, and made obeisance. Furthermore,  
'O fiery flying serpent, after whom

The nations go, let thy dominion last,  
They said, 'for ever.' And the serpent said,  
'It shall : unfold your errand.' They replied,  
One speaking for a space, and afterward  
His fellow taking up the word with fear  
And panting, 'We were set to watch the mouth  
Of great Methuselah. There came to him  
The son of Lamech two days since.' 'My lord,  
They prophesied, the Elder prophesied,  
Unwitting, of the flood of waters—ay,  
A vision was before him, and the lands  
Lay under water drowned : he saw the ark—  
It floated in the Enemy's right hand.'  
'Lord of the lost, the son of Lamech fled  
Into the wilderness to meet His voice  
That reigneth ; and we, diligent to hear  
Aught that might serve thee, followed, but, forbid  
To enter, lay upon its boundary cliff,  
And wished for morning.'

'When the dawn was red,  
We sought the man, we marked him ; and he prayed—  
Kneeling, he prayed in the valley, and he said——'  
'Nay,' quoth the serpent, 'spare me, how, devout  
He fawning grovelled to the All-powerful ;  
But if of what shall hap he aught let fall,  
Speak that.' They answered, 'He did pray as one  
That looketh to outlive mankind—and more,  
We are certified by all his scattered words,

That HE will take from men their length of days,  
 And cut them off like grass in its first flower :  
 From henceforth this shall be.'

That when he heard,  
 The dragon made to the night his moan.

'And more,'  
 They said, 'that He above would have men know  
 That He doth love them, whoso will repent,  
 To that man He is favourable, yea,  
 Will be his loving Lord.'

The dragon cried,  
 'The last is worse than all. Oh, man, thy heart  
 Is stout against His wrath. But will He love ?  
 I heard it rumoured in the heavens of old,  
 (And doth He love?) Thou wilt not, canst not, stand  
 Against the love of God. Dominion fails ;  
 I see it float from me, that long have worn  
 Fetters of flesh to win it. Love of God !  
 I cry against thee ; thou art worse than all.'  
 They answered, 'Be not moved, admirèd chief  
 And trusted of mankind ;' and they went on,  
 And fed him with the prophecies that fell  
 From the Master-shipwright in his prayer.

But prone  
 He lay, for he was sick : at every word  
 Prophetic cowering. As a bruising blow,  
 It fell upon his head and daunted him,  
 Until they ended, saying, 'Prince, behold,

Thy servants have revealed the whole.'

Thereon

He out of snaky lips did hiss forth thanks.  
Then said he, 'Tartis and Deleisonon,  
Receive your wages.' So their fetters fell;  
And they retiring, lauded him, and cried,  
'King, reign for ever.' Then he mourned, 'Amen.'

And he—being left alone—he said: 'A light!  
I see a light—a star among the trees—  
An angel.' And it drew toward the cave,  
But with its sacred feet touched not the grass,  
Nor lifted up the lids of its pure eyes,  
But hung a span's length from that ground polluted,  
At the opening of the cave.

And when he looked,  
The dragon cried, 'Thou newly-fashioned thing,  
Of name unknown, thy scorn becomes thee not.  
Doth not thy Master suffer what thine eyes  
Thou countest all too clean to open on?'  
But still it hovered, and the quietness  
Of holy heaven was on the drooping lids;  
And not as one that answereth, it let fall  
The music from its mouth, but like to one  
That doth not hear, or, hearing, doth not heed.

A message: "I have heard thee, while remote  
I went My rounds among the unfinished stars."

A message : "I have left thee to thy ways,  
And mastered all thy vileness, for thy hate  
I have made to serve the ends of My great love.  
Hereafter will I chain thee down. To-day  
One thing thou art forbidden ; now thou knowest  
The name thereof : I told it thee in heaven,  
When thou wert sitting at My feet. Forbear  
To let that hidden thing be whispered forth :  
For man, ungrateful (and thy hope it was,  
That so ungrateful he might prove), would scorn,  
And not believe it, adding so fresh weight  
Of condemnation to the doomèd world.  
Concerning that, thou art forbid to speak,  
Know thou didst count it, falling from My tongue,  
A lovely song, whose meaning was unknown,  
Unknowable, unbearable to thought,  
But sweeter in the hearing than all harps  
Toned in My holy hollow. Now thine ears  
Are opened, know it, and discern and fear,  
Forbearing speech of it for evermore."

So said, it turned, and with a cry of joy,  
As one released, went up : and it was dawn,  
And all boughs dropped with dew, and out of mist  
Came the red sun and looked into the cave.

But the dragon, left a-tremble, called to him,  
From the nether kingdom, certain of his friends—

Three whom he trusted, councillors accursed.  
A thunder-cloud stooped low and swathed the place  
In its black swirls, and out of it they rushed,  
And hid them in recesses of the cave,  
Because they could not look upon the sun,  
Sith light is pure. And Satan called to them—  
All in the dark, in his great rage he spake :  
'Up,' quoth the dragon ; 'it is time to work,  
Or we are all undone.' And he did hiss,  
And there came shudderings over land and trees,  
A dimness after dawn. The earth threw out  
A blinding fog, that crept toward the cave,  
And rolled up blank before it like a veil—  
A curtain to conceal its habiters.  
Then did those spirits move upon the floor,  
Like pillars of darkness, and with eyes aglow.  
One had a helm for covering of the scars  
That seamed what rested of a goodly face ;  
He wore his vizor up, and all his words  
Were hollower than an echo from the hills :  
He was hight Make. And, lo, his fellow-fiend  
Came after, holding down his dastard head,  
Like one ashamed : now this for craft was great ;  
The dragon honoured him. A third sat down  
Among them, covering with his wasted hand  
Somewhat that pained his breast.

And when the fit  
Of thunder, and the sobbings of the wind,



Were lulled, the dragon spoke with wrath and rage,  
And told them of his matters : ' Look to this,  
If ye be loyal ;' adding, ' Give your thoughts,  
And let me have your counsel in this need.'

One spirit rose and spake, and all the cave  
Was full of sighs, ' The words of Make the Prince,  
Of him once delegate in Betelgeux :  
Whereas of late the manner is to change,  
We know not where 't will end ; and now my words  
Go thus : give way, be peaceable, lie still  
And strive not, else the world that we have won  
He may, to drive us out, reduce to nought.

For while I stood in mine obedience yet,  
Steering of Betelgeux my sun, behold,  
A moon, that evil ones did fill, rolled up  
Astray, and suddenly the Master came,  
And while, a million strong, like rooks they rose,  
He took and broke it, flung it here and there,  
And called a blast to drive the powder forth ;  
And it was fine as dust, and blurred the skies  
Farther than 't is from hence to this young sun.  
Spirits that passed upon their work that day,  
Cried out, " How dusty 't is ! " Behoves us, then,  
That we depart, as leaving unto Him  
This goodly world and goodly race of man.



Not all are doomed : hereafter it may be  
That we find place on it again. But if,  
Too zealous to preserve it, and the men  
Our servants, we oppose Him, He may come  
And choosing rather to undo His work  
Than strive with it for aye, make so an end.'

He sighing paused. Lo, then the serpent hissed  
In impotent rage, 'Depart ! and how depart !  
Can flesh be carried down where spirits wonn ?  
Or I, most miserable, hold my life  
Over the airless, bottomless gulf, and bide  
'The buffetings of yonder shoreless sea ?  
O death, thou terrible doom : O death, thou dread  
Of all that breathe.'

A spirit rose and spake :  
'Whereas in Heaven is power, is much to fear ;  
For this admirèd country we have marred.  
Whereas in Heaven is love (and there are days  
When yet I can recall what love was like),  
Is nought to fear. A threatening makes the whole,  
And clogged with strong conditions : " O, repent,  
Man, and I turn." He, therefore, powerful now,  
And more so, master, that ye bide in clay,  
Threateneth that He may save. They shall not die.'

The dragon said, ' I tremble, I am sick.'  
He said with pain of heart, ' How am I fallen,

For I keep silence ; yea, I have withdrawn  
 From haunting of His gates, and shouting up  
 Defiance. Wherefore doth He hunt me out  
 From this small world, this little one, that I  
 Have been content to take unto myself,  
 I here being loved and worshippèd ? He knoweth  
 How much I have foregone ; and must He stoop  
 To whelm the world, and heave the floors o' the deep,  
 Of purpose to pursue me from my place ?  
 And since I gave men knowledge, must He take  
 Their length of days whereby they perfect it ?  
 So shall He scatter all that I have stored,  
 And get them by degrading them. I know  
 That in the end it is appointed me  
 To fade. I will not fade before the time.'

A spirit rose, the third, a spirit ashamed  
 And subtle, and his face he turned aside :  
 'Whereas,' said he, 'we strive against both power  
 And love, behoves us that we strive aright.  
 Now some of old my comrades, yesterday  
 I met, as they did journey to appear  
 In the Presence ; and I said, "My master lieth  
 Sick yonder, otherwise (for no decree  
 There stands against it) he would also come  
 And make obeisance with the sons of God."  
 They answered, nought denying. Therefore, lord,  
 'T is certain that ye have admittance yet ;

And what doth hinder? Nothing but this breath.  
Were it not well to make an end, and die,  
And gain admittance to the King of kings?  
What if thy slaves by thy consent should take  
And bear thee on their wings above the earth,  
And suddenly let fall—how soon 't were o'er!  
We should have fear and sinking at the heart;  
But in a little moment we should see,  
Rising majestic from a ruined heap,  
The stately spirit that we served of yore.'

The serpent turned his subtle deadly eyes  
Upon the spirit, and hissed; and sick with shame,  
It bowed itself together, and went back  
With hidden face. 'This counsel is not good,'  
The other twain made answer; 'look, my lord,  
Whereas 't is evil in thine eyes, in ours  
'T is evil also; speak, for we perceive  
That on thy tongue the words of counsel sit,  
Ready to fly to our right greedy ears,  
That long for them.' And Satan, flattered thus  
(For ever may the serpent kind be charmed  
With soft sweet words, and music deftly played),  
Replied, 'Whereas I surely rule the world,  
Behoves that ye prepare for me a path,  
And that I, putting of my pains aside,  
Go stir rebellion in the mighty hearts  
O' the giants; for He loveth them, and looks

Full oft complacent on their glorious strength.  
He willeth that they yield, that He may spare ;  
But, by the blackness of my loathèd den,  
I say they shall not, no, they shall not yield ;  
Go, therefore, take to you some harmless guise,  
And spread a rumour that I come. I, sick,  
Sorry, and aged, hasten. I have heard  
Whispers that out of heaven dropped unawares.  
I caught them up, and sith they bode men harm,  
I am ready for to comfort them ; yea, more,  
To counsel, and I will that they drive forth  
The women, the abhorrèd of my soul ;  
Let not a woman breathe where I shall pass,  
Lest the curse fall, and that she bruise my head.  
Friends, if it be their mind to send for me  
An army, and triumphant draw me on  
In the golden car ye wot of, and with shouts,  
I would not that ye hinder them. Ah, then  
Will I make hard their hearts, and grieve Him  
sore,  
That loves them, O, by much too well to wet  
Their stately heads, and soil those locks of  
strength  
Under the fateful brine. Then afterward,  
While He doth reason vainly with them, I  
Will offer Him a pact : “ Great King, a pact,  
And men shall worship Thee, I say they shall,  
For I will bid them do it, yea, and leave

To sacrifice their kind, so Thou my name  
Wilt suffer to be worshipped after Thine.”’

‘Yea, my lord Satan,’ quoth they, ‘do this thing,  
And let us hear thy words, for they are sweet.’

Then he made answer, ‘By a messenger  
Have I this day been warned. There is a deed  
I may not tell of, lest the people add  
Scorn of a Coming Greatness to their faults.  
Why this? Who careth when about to slay,  
And slay indeed, how well they have deserved  
Death, whom he slayeth? Therefore yet is hid  
A meaning of some mercy that will rob  
The nether world. Now look to it—’T were vain,  
Albeit this deluge He would send indeed,  
That we expect the harvest; He would yet  
Be the Master-reaper; for I heard it said,  
Them that be young and know Him not, and them  
That are bound and may not build, yea, more, their  
wives,

Whom, suffering not to hear the doom, they keep  
Joyous behind the curtains, every one  
With maidens nourished in the house, and babes  
And children at her knees—(then what remain!)  
He claimeth and will gather for His own.  
Now, therefore, it were good by guile to work,  
Princes, and suffer not the doom to fall.

There is no evil like to love. I heard  
Him whisper it. Have I put on this flesh  
To ruin His two children beautiful,  
And shall my deed confound me in the end,  
Through awful imitation? Love of God,  
I cry against thee ; thou art worst of all.'

## BOOK IV.

Now while these evil ones took counsel strange,  
The son of Lamech journeyed home ; and, lo !  
A company came down, and struck the track  
As he did enter it. There rode in front  
Two horsemen, young and noble, and behind  
Were following slaves with tent gear ; others led  
Strong horses, others bare the instruments  
O' the chase, and in the rear dull camels lagged,  
Sighing, for they were burdened, and they loved  
The desert sands above that grassy vale.

And as they met, those horsemen drew the rein,  
And fixed on him their grave untroubled eyes ;  
He in his regal grandeur walked alone,  
And had nor steed nor follower, and his mien  
Was grave and like to theirs. He said to them,  
'Fair sirs, whose are ye?' They made answer cold,  
'The beautiful woman, sir, our mother dear,  
Niloiya, bare us to great Lamech's son.'  
And he replying, 'I am he,' they said,  
'We know it, sir. We have remembered you  
Through many seasons. Pray you let us not ;



We fain would greet our mother.' And they made  
Obeisance and passed on ; then all their train,  
Which while they spoke had halted, moved apace,  
And, while the silent father stood, went by,  
He gazing after, as a man that dreams ;  
For he was sick with their cold, quiet scorn,  
That seemed to say, ' Father, we own you not,  
We love you not, for you have left us long—  
So long, we care not that you come again.'

And while the sullen camels moved, he spake  
To him that led the last, ' There are but two  
Of these my sons ; but where doth Japhet ride ?  
For I would see him.' And the leader said,  
' Sir, ye shall find him, if ye follow up  
Along the track. Afore the noonday meal  
The young men, even our masters, bathed ; (there  
grows  
A clump of cedars by the bend of yon  
Clear river)—there did Japhet, after meat,  
Being right weary, lay him down and sleep.  
There, with a company of slaves and some  
Few camels, ye shall find him.'

And the man,  
The father of these three, did let him pass,  
And struggle and give battle to his heart,  
Standing as motionless as pillar set  
To guide a wanderer in a pathless waste ;



But all his strength went from him, and he strove  
Vainly to trample out and trample down  
The misery of his love unsatisfied—  
Unutterable love flung in his face.

Then he broke out in passionate words, that cried  
Against his lot, ' I have lost my own, and won  
None other ; no, not one ! Alas, my sons !  
That I have looked to for my solacing,  
In the bitterness to come. My children dear !'  
And when from his own lips he heard those words,  
With passionate stirring of the heart, he wept.

And none came nigh to comfort him. His face  
Was on the ground ; but having wept, he rose  
Full hastily, and urged his way to find  
The river ; and in hollow of his hand  
Raised up the water to his brow : ' This son,  
This other son of mine,' he said, ' shall see  
No tears upon my face.' And he looked on,  
Beheld the camels, and a group of slaves  
Sitting apart from some one fast asleep,  
Where they had spread out webs of broidery work  
Under a cedar tree ; and he came on,  
And when they made obeisance he declared  
His name, and said, ' I will beside my son  
Sit till he wakeneth.' So Japhet lay  
A-dreaming, and his father drew to him.

He said, 'This cannot scorn me yet ;' and paused,  
Right angry with himself, because the youth,  
Albeit of stately growth, so languidly  
Lay with a listless smile upon his mouth,  
That was full sweet and pure ; and as he looked,  
He half forgot his trouble in his pride:  
'And is this mine ?' said he, 'my son ! mine own !  
(God, thou art good !) O, if this turn away,  
That pang shall be past bearing. I must think  
That all the sweetness of his goodly face  
Is copied from his soul. How beautiful  
Are children to their fathers ! Son, my heart  
Is greatly glad because of thee ; my life  
Shall lack of no completeness in the days  
To come. If I forget the joy of youth,  
In thee shall I be comforted ; ay, see  
My youth, a dearer than my own again.'

And when he ceased, the youth, with sleep content,  
Murmured a little, turned himself and woke.

He woke, and opened on his father's face  
The darkness of his eyes ; but not a word  
The Master-shipwright said—his lips were sealed ;  
He was not ready, for he feared to see  
This mouth curl up with scorn. And Japhet spoke,  
Full of the calm that cometh after sleep :  
'Sir, I have dreamed of you. I pray you, sir,

What is your name ? ' and even with his words  
His countenance changed. The son of Lamech said,  
' Why art thou sad ? What have I done to thee ?'  
And Japhet answered, ' Oh, methought I fled  
In the wilderness before a maddened beast,  
And you came up and slew it ; and I thought  
You were my father ; but I fear me, sir,  
My thoughts were vain.' With that his father said,  
' Whate'er of blessing Thou reserv'st for me,  
God ! if Thou wilt not give to both, give here :  
Bless him with both Thy hands ;' and laid his own  
On Japhet's head.

Then Japhet looked on him,  
Made quiet by content, and answered low,  
With faltering laughter, glad and reverent : ' Sir,  
You are my father ?' ' Ay,' quoth he, ' I am !  
Kiss me, my son ; and let me hear my name,  
My much desired name, from your dear lips.'

Then after, rested, they betook them home :  
And Japhet, walking by the Master, thought,  
' I did not will to love this sire of mine ;  
But now I feel as if I had always known  
And loved him well ; truly, I see not why,  
But I would rather serve him than go free  
With my two brethren.' And he said to him,  
' Father !'—who answered, ' I am here, my son.'  
And Japhet said, ' I pray you, sir, attend

To this my answer : let me go with you,  
For, now I think on it, I do not love  
The chase, nor managing the steed, nor yet  
The arrows and the bow ; but rather you,  
For all you do and say, and you yourself,  
Are goodly and delightsome in mine eyes.  
I pray you, sir, when you go forth again,  
That I may also go.' And he replied,  
' I will tell thy speech unto the Highest ; He  
Shall answer it. But I would speak to thee  
Now of the days to come. Know thou, most dear  
To this thy father, that the drenchèd world,  
When risen clean washed from water, shall receive  
From thee her lordliest governors, from thee  
Daughters of noblest soul.'

So Japhet said,  
' Sir, I am young, but of my mother straight  
I will go ask a wife, that this may be.  
I pray you, therefore, as the manner is  
Of fathers, give me land that I may reap  
Corn for sustaining of my wife, and bruise  
The fruit of the vine to cheer her.' But he said,  
' Dost thou forget ? or dost thou not believe,  
My son ?' He answered, ' I did ne'er believe,  
My father, ere to-day ; but now, methinks,  
Whatever thou believest I believe,  
For thy belovèd sake. If this then be  
As thou (I hear) hast said, and earth doth bear

The last of her wheat harvests, and make ripe  
The latest of her grapes ; yet hear me, sir,  
None of the daughters shall be given to me  
If I be landless.' Then his father said,  
'Lift up thine eyes toward the north, my son :'  
And so he did. 'Behold thy heritage !'  
Quoth the world's prince and master, 'far away  
Upon the side o' the north, where green the field  
Lies every season through, and where the dews  
Of heaven are wholesome, shall thy children reign ;  
I part it to them, for the earth is mine ;  
The Highest gave it me : I make it theirs.  
Moreover, for thy marriage gift, behold  
The cedars where thou sleepest ! There are vines ;  
And up the rise is growing wheat. I give  
(For all, alas ! is mine)—I give thee both  
For dowry, and my blessing.'

And he said,

'Sir, you are good, and therefore the Most High  
Shall bless me also. Sir, I love you well.'

## BOOK V.

AND when two days were over, Japhet said,  
'Mother, so please you, get a wife for me.'  
The mother answered, 'Dost thou mock me, son ?  
'T is not the manner of our kin to wed  
So young. Thou knowest it ; art thou not ashamed ?  
Thou carest not for a wife.' And the youth blushed,  
And made for answer : 'This, my father, saith  
The doom is nigh ; now therefore find a maid,  
Or else shall I be wifeless all my days.  
And as for me, I care not ; but the lands  
Are parted, and the goodliest share is mine.  
And lo ! my brethren are betrothed ; their maids  
Are with thee in the house. Then why not mine ?  
Didst thou not diligently search for these  
Among the noblest born of all the earth,  
And bring them up ? My sisters, dwell they not  
With women that bespake them for their sons ?  
Now, therefore, let a wife be found for me,  
Fair as the day, and gentle to my will  
As thou art to my father's.' When she heard,  
Niloiya sighed, and answered, 'It is well.'

And Japhet went out from her presence.

Then

Quoth the great Master : ' Wherefore sought ye not,  
Woman, these many days, nor tired at all,  
Till ye had found, a maiden for my son ?  
In this ye have done ill.' Niloiya said :  
' Let not my lord be angry. All my soul  
Is sad : my lord hath walked afar so long,  
That some despise thee ; yea, our servants fail  
Lately to bring their stint of corn and wood.  
And, sir, thy household slaves do steal away  
To thy great father, and our lands lie waste—  
None till them : therefore think the women scorn  
To give me—whatsoever gems I send,  
And goodly raiment—(yea, I seek afar,  
And sue with all desire and humbleness  
Through every master's house, but no one gives)—  
A daughter for my son.' With that she ceased.

Then said the Master : ' Some thou hast with thee,  
Brought up among thy children, dutiful  
And fair ; thy father gave them for my slaves—  
Children of them whom he brought captive forth  
From their own heritage.' And she replied,  
Right scornfully : ' Shall Japhet wed a slave ?'  
Then said the Master : ' He shall wed : look thou  
To that. I say not he shall wed a slave ;  
But by the might of One that made him mine,



I will not quit thee for my doomèd way  
 Until thou wilt betroth him. Therefore, haste,  
 Beautiful woman, loved of me and mine,  
 To bring a maiden, and to say, "Behold  
 A wife for Japhet." Then she answered, 'Sir,  
 It shall be done.'

And forth Niloiya sped.

She gathered all her jewels—all she held  
 Of costly or of rich—and went and spake  
 With some few slaves that yet abode with her,  
 For daily they were fewer; and went forth,  
 With fair and flattering words, among her feres,  
 And fain had wrought with them: and she had hope  
 That made her sick, it was so faint; and then  
 She had fear, and after she had certainty,  
 For all did scorn her. 'Nay,' they cried, 'O fool!  
 If this be so, and on a watery world  
 Ye think to rock, what matters if a wife  
 Be free or bond? There shall be none to rule,  
 If she have freedom: if she have it not,  
 None shall there be to serve.'

And she alit,

The time being done, desponding at her door,  
 And went behind a screen, where should have wrought  
 The daughters of the captives; but there wrought  
 One only, and this rose from off the floor,  
 Where she the river rush full deftly wove,  
 And made obeisance. Then Niloiya said,



‘Where are thy fellows?’ And the maid replied,  
‘Let not Niloiya, this my lady loved,  
Be angry ; they are fled since yesternight.’  
Then said Niloiya, ‘Amarant, my slave,  
When have I called thee by thy name before?’  
She answered, ‘Lady, never ;’ and she took  
And spread her broidered robe before her face.  
Niloiya spoke thus : ‘I am come to woe,  
And thou to honour.’ Saying this, she wept  
Passionate tears ; and all the damsel’s soul  
Was full of yearning wonder, and her robe  
Slipped from her hand, and her right innocent face  
Was seen betwixt her locks of tawny hair  
That dropped about her knees, and her two eyes,  
Blue as the much-loved flower that rims the beck,  
Looked sweetly on Niloiya ; but she knew  
No meaning in her words ; and she drew nigh,  
And kneeled and said, ‘Will this my lady speak ?  
Her damsel is desirous of her words.’  
Then said Niloiya, ‘I, thy mistress, sought  
A wife for Japhet, and no wife is found.’  
And yet again she wept with grief of heart,  
Saying, ‘Ah me, miserable ! I must give  
A wife : the Master willeth it : a wife,  
Ah me ! unto the high-born. He will scorn  
His mother and reproach me. I must give—  
None else have I to give—a slave—even thee.’  
This further spake Niloiya : ‘I was good—

Had rue on thee, a tender sucking child,  
When they did tear thee from thy mother's breast ;  
I fed thee, gave thee shelter, and I taught  
Thy hands all cunning arts that women prize.  
But out on me ! my good is turned to ill.  
O, Japhet, well-beloved !' And she rose up,  
And did restrain herself, saying, ' Dost thou heed ?  
Behold, this thing shall be.' The damsel sighed,  
' Lady, I do.' Then went Niloiya forth.

And Amarant murmured in her deep amaze,  
' Shall Japhet's little children kiss my mouth ?  
And will he sometimes take them from my arms,  
And almost care for me for their sweet sake ?  
I have not dared to think I loved him—now  
I know it well : but O, the bitterness  
For him !' And ending thus, the damsel rose,  
For Japhet entered. And she bowed herself  
Meekly and made obeisance, but her blood  
Ran cold about her heart, for all his face  
Was coloured with his passion.

Japhet spoke :

He said, ' My father's slave ;' and she replied,  
Low drooping her fair head, ' My master's son.'  
And after that a silence fell on them,  
With trembling at her heart, and rage at his.  
And Japhet, mastered of his passion, sat  
And could not speak. O ! cruel seemed his fate—

So cruel she that told it, so unkind.  
 His breast was full of wounded love and wrath  
 Wrestling together ; and his eyes flashed out  
 Indignant lights, as all amazed he took  
 The insult home that she had offered him,  
 Who should have held his honour dear.

And, lo,

The misery choked him, and he cried in pain,  
 ‘ Go, get thee forth ; ’ but she, all white and still,  
 Parted her lips to speak, and yet spake not,  
 Nor moved. And Japhet rose up passionate,  
 With lifted arm as one about to strike ;  
 But she cried out and met him, and she held  
 With desperate might his hand, and prayed to him,  
 ‘ Strike not, or else shall men from henceforth say,  
 “ Japhet is like to us.” ’ And he shook off  
 The damsel, and he said, ‘ I thank thee, slave ;  
 For never have I stricken yet or child  
 Or woman. Not for thy sake am I glad,  
 Nay, but for mine. Get hence. Obey my words.’  
 Then Japhet lifted up his voice, and wept.

And no more he restrained himself, but cried,  
 With heavings of the heart, ‘ O hateful day !  
 O day that shuts the door upon delight !  
 A slave ! to wed a slave ! O loathed wife,  
 Hated of Japhet’s soul ! ’ And after, long,  
 With face between his hands, he sat, his thoughts

Sullen and sore ; then scorned himself, and saying,  
'I will not take her, I will die unwed,  
It is but that ;' lift up his eyes and saw  
The slave, and she was sitting at his feet ;  
And he, so greatly wondering that she dared  
The disobedience, looked her in the face  
Less angry than afraid, for pale she was  
As lily yet unsmiled on by the sun ;  
And he, his passion being spent, sighed out,  
'Low am I fallen indeed. Hast thou no fear,  
That thou dost flout me?' but she gave to him  
The sighing echo of his sigh, and mourned,  
'No.'

And he wondered, and he looked again,  
For in her heart there was a new-born pang,  
That cried ; but she, as mothers with their young,  
Suffered, yet loved it ; and there shone a strange  
Grave sweetness in her blue unsullied eyes.  
And Japhet, leaning from the settle, thought,  
'What is it? I will call her by her name,  
To comfort her, for also she is nought  
To blame ; and since I will not her to wife,  
She falls back from the freedom she had hoped.'  
Then he said, 'Amarant ;' and the damsel drew  
Her eyes down slowly from the shaded sky  
Of even, and she said, 'My master's son,  
Japhet ;' and Japhet said, 'I am not wroth  
With thee, but wretched for my mother's deed,

Because she shamed me.'

And the maiden said,  
'Doth not thy father love thee well, sweet sir?'  
'Ay,' quoth he, 'well.' She answered, 'Let the heart  
Of Japhet, then, be merry. Go to him  
And say, "The damsel whom my mother chose,  
Sits by her in the house; but as for me,  
Sir, ere I take her, let me go with you  
To that same outland country. Also, sir,  
My damsel hath not worked as yet the robe  
Of her betrothal;" now, then, sith he loves,  
He will not say thee nay. Herein for a while  
Is respite, and thy mother far and near  
Will seek again: it may be she will find  
A fair, free maiden.'

Japhet said, 'O maid,  
Sweet are thy words; but what if I return,  
And all again be as it is to-day?'  
Then Amarant answered, 'Some have died in youth;  
But yet, I think not, sir, that I shall die.  
Though ye shall find it even as I had died—  
Silent, for any words I might have said;  
Empty, for any space I might have filled.  
Sir, I will steal away, and hide afar;  
But if a wife be found, then will I bide  
And serve.' He answered, 'Oh, thy speech is good;  
Now therefore (since my mother gave me thee),  
I will reward it; I will find for thee

A goodly husband, and will make him free  
Thee also.'

Then she started from his feet,  
And, red with shame and anger, flashed on him  
The passion of her eyes ; and put her hands  
With catching of the breath to her fair throat,  
And stood in her defiance lost to fear,  
Like some fair hind in desperate danger turned  
And brought to bay, and wild in her despair.  
But shortly, ' I remember,' quoth she, low,  
With raining down of tears and broken sighs,  
' That I am Japhet's slave ;' beseech you, sir,  
As ye were ever gentle, ay, and sweet  
Of language to me, be not harder now.  
Sir, I was yours to take ; I knew not, sir,  
That also ye might give me. Pray you, sir,  
Be pitiful—be merciful to me,  
A slave.' He said, ' I thought to do thee good,  
For good hath been thy counsel ;' but she cried,  
' Good master, be you therefore pitiful  
To me, a slave.' And Japhet wondered much  
At her, and at her beauty, for he thought,  
' None of the daughters are so fair as this,  
Nor stand with such a grace majestical ;  
She in her locks is like the travelling sun,  
Setting, all clad in coifing clouds of gold.  
And would she die unmatched ?' He said to her,  
' What ! wilt thou sail alone in yonder ship,



And dwell alone hereafter?' 'Ay,' she said,  
'And serve my mistress.'

'It is well,' quoth he,  
And held his hand to her, as is the way  
Of masters. Then she kissed it, and she said,  
'Thanks for benevolence,' and turned herself,  
Adding, 'I rest, sir, on your gracious words ;'  
Then stepped into the twilight and was gone.

And Japhet, having found his father, said,  
'Sir, let me also journey when ye go.'  
Who answered, 'Hath thy mother done her part ?'  
He said, 'Yea, truly, and my damsel sits  
Before her in the house ; and also, sir,  
She said to me, "I have not worked, as yet,  
The garment of betrothal." ' And he said,  
''Tis not the manner of our kin to speak  
Concerning matters that a woman rules ;  
But hath thy mother brought a damsel home,  
And let her see thy face, then all is one  
As ye wete wed.' He answered, 'Even so,  
It matters nothing ; therefore hear me, sir :  
The damsel being mine, I am content  
To let her do according to her will ;  
And when we shall return, so surely, sir,  
As I shall find her by my mother's side,  
Then will I take her ;' and he left to speak ;  
His father answering, 'Son, thy words are good.'



## BOOK VI.

NIGHT. Now a tent was pitched, and Japhet sat  
In the door and watched, for on a litter lay  
The father of his love. And he was sick  
To death ; but daily he would rouse him up,  
And stare upon the light, and ever say,  
'On, let us journey ;' but it came to pass  
That night, across their path a river ran,  
And they who served the father and the son  
Had pitched the tents beside it, and had made  
A fire, to scare away the savagery  
That roamed in that great forest, for their way  
Had led among the trees of God.

The moon

Shone on the river, like a silver road  
To lead them over ; but when Japhet looked,  
He said, ' We shall not cross it. I shall lay  
This well-belovèd head low in the leaves—  
Not on the farther side.' From time to time,  
The water-snakes would stir its glassy flow  
With curling undulations, and would lay  
Their heads along the bank, and, subtle-eyed,

Consider those long spiriting flames, that danced,  
When some red log would break and crumble down,  
And show his dark despondent eyes, that watched,  
Wearily, even Japhet's. But he cared  
Little ; and in the dark, that was not dark,  
But dimness of confused incertitude,  
Would move anear all silently, and gaze  
And breathe, and shape itself, a manèd thing  
With eyes ; and still he cared not, and the form  
Would falter, then recede, and melt again  
Into the farther shade. And Japhet said :  
'How long? The moon hath grown again in heaven,  
After her caving twice, since we did leave  
The threshold of our home ; and now what 'vails  
That far on tumbled mountain snow we toiled,  
Hungry, and weary, all the day ; by night  
Waked with a dreadful trembling underneath,  
To look, while every cone smoked, and there ran  
Red brooks adown, that licked the forest up,  
While in the pale white ashes wading on  
We saw no stars ?—what 'vails if afterward,  
Astonished with great silence, we did move  
Over the measureless, unknown desert mead ;  
While all the day, in rents and crevices,  
Would lie the lizard and the serpent kind,  
Drowsy ; and in the night take fearsome shapes,  
And ofttimes woman-faced and woman-haired  
Would trail their snaky length, and curse and mourn ;

Or there would wander up, when we were tired,  
Dark troops of evil ones, with eyes morose,  
Withstanding us, and staring ;—O ! what 'vails  
That in the dread deep forest we have fought  
With following packs of wolves ? These men of  
    might,

Even the giants, shall not hear the doom  
My father came to tell them of. Ah, me !  
If God indeed had sent him, would he lie  
(For he is stricken with a sore disease)  
Helpless outside their city ?'

    Then he rose,  
And put aside the curtains of the tent,  
To look upon his father's face ; and lo !  
The tent being dark, he thought that somewhat sat  
Beside the litter ; and he set his eyes  
To see it, and saw not ; but only marked  
Where, fallen away from manhood and from power,  
His father lay. Then he came forth again,  
Trembling, and crouched beside the dull red fire,  
And murmured, ' Now it is the second time :  
An old man, as I think (but scarcely saw),  
Dreadful of might. Its hair was white as wool :  
I dared not look ; perhaps I saw not aught,  
But only knew that it was there : the same  
Which walked beside us once when he did pray.'  
And Japhet hid his face between his hands  
For fear, and grief of heart, and weariness

Of watching ; and he slumbered not, but mourned  
To himself, a little moment, as it seemed,  
For sake of his loved father : then he lift  
His eyes, and day had dawned. Right suddenly  
The moon withheld her silver, and she hung  
Frail as a cloud. The ruddy flame that played  
By night on dim, dusk trees, and on the flood,  
Crept red amongst the logs, and all the world  
And all the water blushed and bloomed. The stars  
Were gone, and golden shafts came up, and touched  
The feathered heads of palms, and green was born  
Under the rosy cloud, and purples flew  
Like veils across the mountains ; and he saw,  
Winding athwart them, bathed in blissful peace,  
And the sacredness of morn, the battlements  
And outposts of the giants ; and there ran  
On the other side the river, as it were,  
White mounds of marble, tabernacles fair,  
And towers below a line of inland cliff :  
These were their fastnesses, and here their homes.

In valleys and the forest, all that night,  
There had been woe ; in every hollow place,  
And under walls, like drifted flowers, or snow,  
Women lay mourning ; for the serpent lodged  
That night within the gates, and had decreed,  
' I will (or ever I come) that ye drive out  
The women, the abhorrèd of my soul.'

Therefore, more beauteous than all climbing bloom,  
Purple and scarlet, cumbering of the boughs,  
Or flights of azure doves that lit to drink  
The water of the river ; or, new born,  
The quivering butterflies in companies,  
That slowly crept adown the sandy marge,  
Like living crocus beds, and also drank,  
And rose an orange cloud ; their hollowed hands  
They dipped between the lilies, or with robes  
Full of ripe fruitage, sat and peeled and ate,  
Weeping ; or comforting their little ones,  
And lulling them with sorrowful long hymns  
Among the palms.

So went the earlier morn.

Then came a messenger, while Japhet sat  
Mournfully, and he said, 'The men of might  
Are willing ; let thy master, youth, appear.'  
And Japhet said, 'So be it ;' and he thought,  
'Now will I trust in God ;' and he went in  
And stood before his father, and he said,  
'My father ;' but the Master answered not,  
But gazed upon the curtains of his tent,  
Nor knew that one had called him. He was clad  
As ready for the journey, and his feet  
Were sandalled, and his staff was at his side ;  
And Japhet took the gown of sacrifice  
And spread it on him, and he laid his crown  
Upon his knees, and he went forth, and lift

His hand to heaven, and cried, 'My father's God !'  
But neither whisper came nor echo fell  
When he did listen. Therefore he went on :  
'Behold, I have a thing to say to thee.  
My father charged thy servant, "Let not ruth  
Prevail with thee, to turn and bear me hence,  
For God appointed me my task, to preach  
Before the mighty." I must do my part  
(O ! let it not displease thee), for he said  
But yesternight, "When they shall send for me,  
Take me before them." And I sware to him.  
I pray thee, therefore, count his life and mine  
Precious ; for I that sware, I will perform.'

Then cried he to his people, 'Let us hence :  
Take up the litter.' And they set their feet  
Toward the raft whereby men crossed that flood.

And while they journeyed, lo, the giants sat  
Within the fairest hall where all were fair,  
Each on his carven throne, o'er-canopied  
With work of women. And the dragon lay  
In a place of honour ; and with subtlety  
He counselled them, for they did speak by turns ;  
And they being proud, might nothing master them,  
But guile alone : and he did fawn on them ;  
And when the younger taunted him, submissive  
He testified great humbleness, and cried,



‘ A cruel God, forsooth ! but nay, O nay,  
I will not think it of Him, that He meant  
To threaten these. O, when I look on them,  
How doth my soul admire.’

And one stood forth,  
The youngest ; of his brethren, named ‘ the Rock.’  
‘ Speak out,’ quoth he, ‘ thou toothless slaving thing,  
What is it ? thinkest thou that such as we  
Should be afraid ? What is this goodly doom ?’  
And Satan laughed upon him. ‘ Lo,’ said he,  
‘ Thou art not fully grown, and every one  
I look on, standeth higher by the head,  
Yea, and the shoulders, than do other men ;  
Forsooth, thy servant thought not thou wouldst fear,  
Thou and thy fellows.’ Then with one accord,  
‘ Speak,’ cried they ; and with mild persuasive eyes,  
And flattering tongue, he spoke.

‘ Ye mighty ones,  
It hath been known to you these many days  
How that for piety I am much famed.  
I am exceeding pious : if I lie,  
As hath been whispered, it is but for sake  
Of God, and that ye should not think Him hard,  
For I am all for God. Now some have thought  
That He hath also (and it may be so  
Or yet may not be so) on me been hard ;  
Be not ye therefore wroth, for my poor sake ;  
I am contented to have earned your weal,



Though I must therefore suffer.

Now to-day

One cometh, yea, an harmless man, a fool,  
Who boasts he hath a message from our God,  
And lest that you, for bravery of heart  
And stoutness, being angered with his prate,  
Should lift a hand, and kill him, I am here.'

Then spoke the Leader, 'How now, snake? Thy  
words

Ring false. Why ever liest thou, snake, to us?  
Thou coward! none of us will see thee harmed.  
I say thou liest The land is strewed with slain;  
Myself have hewn down companies, and blood  
Makes fertile all the field. Thou knowest it well;  
And hast thou, driveller, panting sore for age,  
Come with a force to bid us spare one fool?'

And Satan answered, 'Nay you! be not wroth;  
Yet true it is, and yet not all the truth.  
Your servant would have told the rest, if now  
(For fullness of your life being fretted sore  
At mine infirmities, which God in vain  
I supplicate to heal) ye had not caused  
My speech to stop.' And he they called 'the Oak'  
Made answer, 'T is a good snake; let him be.  
Why would ye fright the poor old craven beast?  
Look how his lolling tongue doth foam for fear.  
Ye should have mercy, brethren, on the weak.

Speak, dragon, thou hast leave ; make stout thy heart.  
 What ! hast thou lied to this great company ?  
 It was, we know it was, for humbleness ;  
 Thou wert not willing to offend with truth.'

'Yea, majesties,' quoth Satan, ' thus it was,'  
 And lifted up appealing eyes, and groaned ;  
 ' O, can it be, compassionate as brave,  
 And housed in cunning works themselves have reared,  
 And served in gold, and warmed with minivere,  
 And ruling nobly—that He, not content  
 Unless alone He reigneth, looks to bend  
 Or break them in, like slaves to cry to Him,  
 " What is Thy will with us, O Master dear ? "  
 Or else to eat of death ?

For my part, lords,

I cannot think it : for my piety  
 And reason, which I also share with you,  
 Are my best lights, and ever counsel me,  
 " Believe not aught against thy God ; believe,  
 Since thou canst never reach to do Him wrong,  
 That He will never stoop to do thee wrong.  
 Is He not just and equal, yea, and kind ? "  
 Therefore, O majesties, it is my mind  
 Concerning him ye wot of, thus to think  
 The message is not like what I have learned  
 By reason, and experience, of the God.  
 ' Therefore no message 't is. The man is mad.'

Thereat the Leader laughed for scorn. ‘Hold, snake ;  
 If God be just, there SHALL be reckoning days.  
 We rather would He were a partial God,  
 And being strong, He sided with the strong.  
 Turn now thy reason to the other side,  
 And speak for that ; for as to justice, snake,  
 We would have none of it.’

And Satan fawned :

‘My lord is pleased to mock at my poor wit ;  
 Yet in my pious fashion I must talk :  
 For say that God was wroth with man, and came  
 And slew him ; that should make an empty world,  
 But not a better nation.’

This replied,

‘Truth, dragon, yet He is not bound to mean  
 A better nation ; maybe, He designs,  
 If none will turn again, a punishment  
 Upon an evil one.’

And Satan cried,

‘Alas ! my heart being full of love for men,  
 I cannot choose but think of God as like  
 To me ; and yet my piety concludes,  
 Since He will have your fear, that love alone  
 Sufficeth not, and I admire, and say,  
 “Give me, O friends, your love, and give to God  
 Your fear.”’ But they cried out in wrath and rage,  
 ‘We are not strong that any we will fear,  
 Nor specially a foe that means us ill.’

## BOOK VII.

AND while he spoke there was a noise without ;  
The curtains of the door were flung aside,  
And some with heavy feet bare in, and set  
A litter on the floor.

The Master lay  
Upon it, but his eyes were dimmed and set ;  
And Japhet, in despairing weariness,  
Leaned it beside. He marked the mighty ones,  
Silent for pride of heart, and in his place  
The jewelled dragon ; and the dragon laughed,  
And subtly peered at him, till Japhet shook  
With rage and fear. The snaky wonder cried,  
Hissing, 'Thou brown-haired youth, come up to me ;  
I fain would have thee for my shrine afar,  
To serve among an host as beautiful  
As thou : draw near.' It hissed, and Japhet felt  
Horrible drawings, and cried out in fear,  
'Father ! O help, the serpent draweth me !'  
And struggled and grew faint, as in the toils  
A netted bird. But still his father lay  
Unconscious, and the mighty did not speak,

But half in fear and half for wonderment  
Beheld. And yet again the dragon laughed,  
And leered at him and hissed ; and Japhet strove  
Vainly to take away his spell-set eyes,  
And moved to go to him, till piercingly  
Crying out, ' God ! forbid it, God in heaven !'  
The dragon lowered his head, and shut his eyes  
As feigning sleep ; and, suddenly released,  
He fell back staggering ; and at noise of it,  
And clash of Japhet's weapons on the floor,  
And Japhet's voice crying out, ' I loathe thee, snake !  
I hate thee ! O, I hate thee !' came again  
The senses of the shipwright ; and he, moved,  
And looking, as one 'mazed, distressfully  
Upon the mighty, said, ' One called on God :  
Where is my God ? If God have need of me,  
Let Him come down and touch my lips with strength,  
Or dying I shall die.'

It came to pass,  
While he was speaking, that the curtains swayed ;  
A rushing wind did move throughout the place,  
And all the pillars shook, and on the head  
Of Noah the hair was lifted, and there played  
A somewhat, as it were a light, upon  
His breast ; then fell a darkness, and men heard  
A whisper as of one that spake. With that,  
The daunted mighty ones kept silent watch  
Until the wind had ceased and darkness fled.

When it grew light, there curled a cloud of smoke  
From many censers where the dragon lay.  
It hid him. He had called his ministrants,  
And bid them veil him thus, that none might look ;  
Also the folk who came with Noah had fled.

But Noah was seen, for he stood up erect,  
And leaned on Japhet's hand. Then, after pause,  
The Leader said, ' My brethren, it were well  
(For nought we fear) to let this sorcerer speak.'  
And they did reach toward the man their staves,  
And cry with loud accord, ' Hail, sorcerer, hail !'

And he made answer, ' Hail ! I am a man  
That is a shipwright. I was born afar  
To Lamech, him that reigned a king, to wit,  
Over the land of Jalal. Majesties,  
I bring a message,—lay you it to heart ;  
For there is wrath in heaven : my God is wroth.  
" Prepare your houses, or I come," saith He,  
" A Judge." Now, therefore, say not in your hearts,  
" What have we done ?" Your dogs may answer that,  
To make whom fiercer for the chase, ye feed  
With captives whom ye slew not in the war,  
But saved alive, and living throw to them  
Daily. Your wives may answer that, whose babes  
Their firstborn ye do take and offer up  
To this abhorrèd snake, while yet the milk

Is in their innocent mouths—your maiden babes  
 Tender. Your slaves may answer that—the gangs  
 Whose eyes ye did put out to make them work  
 By night unwitting, (yea, by multitudes  
 They work upon the wheel in chains). Your friends  
 May answer that—(their bleachèd bones cry out,  
 For ye did, wickedly, to eat their lands,  
 Turn on their valleys, in a time of peace,  
 The rivers, and they, choking in the night,  
 Died unavenged. But rather (for I leave  
 To tell of more, the time would be so long  
 To do it, and your time, O mighty ones,  
 Is short),—but rather say, “We sinners know  
 Why the Judge standeth at the door,” and turn  
 While yet there may be respite, and repent.

“Or else,” saith He that formèd you, “I swear,  
 By all the silence of the times to come,  
 By the solemnities of death,—yea, more,  
 By Mine own power and love which ye have scorned,  
 That I will come. I will command the clouds,  
 And raining they shall rain ; yea, I will stir  
 With all my storms the ocean for your sake,  
 And break for you the boundary of the deep.

“Then shall the mighty mourn.

Should I forbear,  
 That have been patient? I will not forbear !



For yet," saith He, "the weak cry out ; for yet  
The little ones do languish ; and the slave  
Lifts up to Me his chain. I therefore, I  
Will hear them. I by death will scatter you ;  
Yea, and by death will draw them to My breast,  
And gather them to peace.

But yet," saith He,  
"Repent, and turn you. Wherefore will ye die?"

'Turn then, O turn, while yet the enemy  
Untamed of man fatefully moans afar ;  
For if ye will not turn, the doom is near.  
'Then shall the crested wave make sport, and beat  
You mighty at your doors. Will ye be wroth ?  
Will ye forbid it? Monsters of the deep  
Shall suckle in your palaces their young,  
And swim atween your hangings, all of them  
Costly with broidered work, and rare with gold  
And white and scarlet (there did ye oppress—  
There did ye make you vile) ; but ye shall lie  
Meekly, and storm and wind shall rage above,  
And urge the weltering wave.

"Yet," saith thy God,  
"Son," ay, to each of you He saith, "O son,  
Made in My image, beautiful and strong,  
Why wilt thou die? Thy Father loves thee well.  
Repent and turn thee from thine evil ways,  
O son ! and no more dare the wrath of love.

Live for thy Father's sake that formèd thee.  
Why wilt thou die?" Here will I make an end.'

Now ever on his daïs the dragon lay,  
Feigning to sleep ; and all the mighty ones  
Were wroth, and chided, some against the woe,  
And some at whom the sorcerer they had named,—  
Some at their fellows, for the younger sort—  
As men the less acquaint with deeds of blood,  
And given to learning and the arts of peace  
(Their fathers having crushed rebellion out  
Before their time)—lent favourable ears.  
They said, ' A man, or false or fanatic,  
May claim good audience if he fill our ears  
With what is strange : and we would hear again.'

The Leader said, ' An audience hath been given.  
The man hath spoken, and his words are nought ;  
A feeble threatener, with a foolish threat,  
And it is not our manner that we sit  
Beyond the noonday ; ' then they grandly rose,  
A stalwart crowd, and with their Leader moved  
To the tones of harping, and the beat of shawms,  
And the noise of pipes, away. But some were left  
About the Master ; and the feigning snake  
Couched on his daïs.

Then one to Japhet said,  
One called ' the Cedar Tree,' ' Dost thou, too, think

To reign upon our lands when we lie drowned?’  
And Japhet said, ‘I think not, nor desire,  
Nor in my heart consent, but that ye swear  
Allegiance to the God, and live.’ He cried,  
To one surnamed ‘the Pine’—‘Brother, behoves  
That deep we cut our names in yonder crag,  
Else when this youth returns, his sons may ask  
Our names, and he may answer, “Matters not,  
For my part I forget them.”’

Japhet said,  
‘They might do worse than that, they might deny  
That such as you have ever been.’ With that  
They answered, ‘No, thou dost not think it, no!’  
And Japhet, being chafed, replied in heat,  
‘And wherefore? if ye say of what is sworn,  
“He will not do it,” shall it be more hard  
For future men, if any talk on it,  
To say, “He did not do it”?’ They replied,  
With laughter, ‘Lo you! he is stout with us.  
And yet he covered before the poor old snake.  
Sirrah, when you are saved, we pray you now  
To bear our might in mind—do, sirrah, do;  
And likewise tell your sons, “‘The Cedar Tree’  
Was a good giant, for he struck me not,  
Though he was young and full of sport, and though  
I taunted him.”’

With that they also passed.  
But there remained who with the shipwright spoke :

‘How wilt thou certify to us thy truth?’  
And he related to them all his ways  
From the beginning : of the Voice that called ;  
Moreover, how the ship of doom was built.

And one made answer, ‘Shall the mighty God  
Talk with a man of wooden beams and bars?  
No, thou mad preacher, no. If He, Eterne,  
Be ordering of His far infinitudes,  
And darkness cloud a world, it is but chance,  
As if the shadow of His hand had fallen  
On one that He forgot, and troubled it.’

Then said the Master, ‘Yet—who told thee so?’

And from his daïs the feigning serpent hissed :  
‘Preacher, the light within, it was that shined,  
And told him so. The pious will have dread  
Him to declare such as ye rashly told.  
The course of God is one. It likes not us  
To think of Him as being acquaint with change :  
It were beneath Him. Nay, the finished earth  
Is left to her great masters. They must rule ;  
They do ; and I have set myself between,—  
A visible thing for worship, sith His face  
(For He is hard) He showeth not to men.  
Yea, I have set myself ’twixt God and man,  
To be interpreter, and teach mankind

A pious lesson by my piety.  
 He loveth not, nor hateth, nor desires—  
 It were beneath Him.'

And the Master said,  
 'Thou liest. Thou wouldst lie away the world,  
 If He, whom thou hast dared to speak against,  
 Would suffer it.' 'I may not chide with thee,  
 It answered, 'now ; but if there come such time  
 As thou hast prophesied, as I now reign  
 In all men's sight, shall my dominion then  
 Reach to be mighty in their souls. Thou too  
 Shalt feel it, prophet.' And he lowered his head.

Then quoth the Leader of the young men : 'Sir,  
 We scorn you not ; speak further ; yet our thought  
 First answer. Not but by a miracle  
 Can this thing be. The fashion of the world  
 We heretofore have never known to change ;  
 And will God change it now?'

He then replied :  
 'What is thy thought? THERE IS NO MIRACLE?  
 There is a great one, which thou hast not read,  
 And never shalt escape. Thyself, O man,  
 Thou art the miracle. Lo, if thou sayest,  
 "I am one, and fashioned like the gracious world,  
 Red clay is all my make, myself, my whole,  
 And not my habitation," then thy sleep  
 Shall give thee wings to play among the rays

O' the morning. If thy thought be, "I am one—  
 A spirit among spirits—and the world  
 A dream my spirit dreameth of, my dream  
 Being all," the dominating mountains strong  
 Shall not for that forbear to take thy breath,  
 And rage with all their winds, and beat thee back,  
 And beat thee down when thou wouldst set thy feet  
 Upon their awful crests. Ay, thou thyself,  
 Being in the world and of the world, thyself  
 Hast breathed in breath from Him that made the world.  
 Thou dost inherit, as thy Maker's son,  
 That which He is, and that which He hath made :  
 Thou art thy Father's copy of Himself,—  
 THOU art thy Father's miracle.

Behold,

He buildeth up the stars in companies ;  
 He made for them a law. To man He said,  
 "Freely I give thee freedom." What remains?  
 O, it remains, if thou, the image of God,  
 Wilt reason well, that thou shalt know His ways ;  
 But first thou must be loyal—love, O man,  
 Thy Father—hearken when He pleads with thee,  
 For there is something left of Him e'en now,—  
 A witness for thy Father in thy soul,  
 Albeit thy better state thou hast foregone.

Now, then, be still, and think not in thy soul,  
 "The rivers in their course for ever run,

And turn not from it. He is like to them  
 Who made them." Think the rather, "With my foot  
 I have turned the rivers from their ancient way,  
 To water grasses that were fading. What !  
 Is God, my Father, as the river wave,  
 That yet descendeth, like the lesser thing  
 He made, and not like me, a living son,  
 That changed the water-course to suit his will?"

' Man is the miracle in nature. God  
 Is the ONE MIRACLE to man. Behold,  
 "There is a God," thou sayest. Thou sayest well :  
 In that thou sayest all. To Be is more  
 Of wonderful, than being, to have wrought,  
 Or reigned, or rested.

Hold then there, content ;

Learn that to love is the one way to know,  
 Or God or man : it is not love received  
 That maketh man to know the inner life  
 Of them that love him ; his own love bestowed  
 Shall do it. Love thy Father, and no more  
 His doings shall be strange. Thou shalt not fret  
 At any counsel, then, that He will send,—  
 No, nor rebel, albeit He have with thee  
 Great reservations. Know, to Be is more  
 Than to have acted ; yea, or after rest  
 And patience, to have risen and been wroth,  
 Broken the sequence of an ordered earth



And troubled nations.'

Then the dragon sighed.

'Poor fanatic,' quoth he, 'thou speakest well.  
Would I were like thee, for thy faith is strong,  
Albeit thy senses wander. Yea, good sooth,  
My masters, let us not despise, but learn  
Fresh loyalty from this poor loyal soul.  
Let us go forth—(myself will also go  
To head you)—and do sacrifice ; for that,  
We know, is pleasing to the mighty God :  
But as for building many arks of wood,  
O majesties ! when He shall counsel you  
HIMSELF, then build. What say you, shall it be  
An hundred oxen—fat, well liking, white ?  
An hundred ? why, a thousand were not much  
To such as you.' Then Noah lift up his arms  
To heaven, and cried, 'Thou aged shape of sin,  
The Lord rebuke thee.'

## BOOK VIII.

THEN one ran, crying, while Niloiya wrought,  
'The Master cometh !' and she went within  
To adorn herself for meeting him. And Shem  
Went forth and talked with Japhet in the field,  
And said, 'Is it well, my brother?' He replied,  
'Well ! and, I pray you, is it well at home ?'

But Shem made answer, 'Can a house be well,  
If he that should command it bides afar ?  
Yet well is thee, because a fair free maid  
Is found to wed thee ; and they bring her in  
This day at sundown. Therefore is much haste  
To cover thick with costly webs the floor,  
And pluck and cover thick the same with leaves  
Of all sweet herbs—I warrant, ye shall hear  
No footfall where she treadeth ; and the seats  
Are ready, spread with robes ; the tables set  
With golden baskets, red pomegranates shred  
To fill them ; and the rubied censers smoke,  
Heaped up with ambergris and cinnamon,  
And frankincense and cedar.'

Japhet said,  
‘ I will betroth her to me straight ;’ and went  
(Yet laboured he with sore disquietude)  
To gather grapes, and reap and bind the sheaf  
For his betrothal. And his brother spake,  
‘ Where is our father ? doth he preach to-day ?’  
And Japhet answered, ‘ Yea. He said to me,  
“ Go forward ; I will follow when the folk  
By yonder mountain-hold I shall have warned.” ’

And Shem replied, ‘ How thinkest thou ?—thine ears  
Have heard him oft.’ He answered, ‘ I do think  
These be the last days of this old fair world.’

Then he did tell him of the giant folk :  
How they, than he, were taller by the head ;  
How one must stride that will ascend the steps  
That lead to their wide halls ; and how they drave,  
With manful shouts, the mammoth to the north ;  
And how the talking dragon lied and fawned,  
They seated proudly on their ivory thrones,  
And scorning him : and of their peakèd hoods,  
And garments wrought upon, each with the tale  
Of him that wore it—all his manful deeds :  
(Yea, and about their skirts were effigies  
Of kings that they had slain ; and some, whose swords  
Many had pierced, wore vestures all of red,  
To signify much blood) : and of their pride

He told, but of the vision in the tent  
He told him not.

And when they reached the house,  
Niloiya met them, and to Japhet cried,  
'All hail, right fortunate! Lo, I have found  
A maid. And now thou hast done well to reap  
The late ripe corn.' So he went in with her,  
And she did talk with him right motherly:  
'It hath been fully told me how ye loathed  
To wed thy father's slave; yea, she herself,  
Did she not all declare to me?'

He said,  
'Yet is thy damsel fair, and wise of heart.'  
'Yea,' quoth his mother; 'she made clear to me  
How ye did weep, my son, and ye did vow,  
"I will not take her!" Now it was not I  
That wrought to have it so.' And he replied,  
'I know it.' Quoth the mother, 'It is well;  
For that same cause is laughter in my heart.'  
'But she is sweet of language,' Japhet said.  
'Ay,' quoth Niloiya, 'and thy wife no less  
Whom thou shalt wed anon—forsooth, anon—  
It is a lucky hour. Thou wilt?' He said,  
'I will.' And Japhet laid the slender sheaf  
From off his shoulder, and he said, 'Behold,  
My father!' Then Niloiya turned herself,  
And lo! the shipwright stood. 'All hail!' quoth she,  
And bowed herself, and kissed him on the mouth;

But while she spake with him, sorely he sighed ;  
And she did hang about his neck the robe  
Of feasting, and she poured upon his hands  
Clear water, and anointed him, and set  
Before him bread.

And Japhet said to him,  
' My father, my beloved, wilt thou yet  
Be sad because of scorning? Eat this day ;  
For as an angel in their eyes thou art  
Who stand before thee.' But he answered, ' Peace !  
Thy words are wide.'

And when Niloiya heard,  
She said, ' Is this a time for mirth of heart  
And wine? Behold, I thought to wed my son,  
Even this Japhet ; but is this a time,  
When sad is he to whom is my desire,  
And lying under sorrow as from God?'

He answered, ' Yea, it is a time of times ;  
Bring in the maid.' Niloiya said, ' The maid  
That first I spoke on, shall not Japhet wed ;  
It likes not her, nor yet it likes not me.  
But I have found another ; yea, good sooth,  
The damsel will not tarry, she will come  
With all her slaves by sundown.'

And she said,  
' Comfort thy heart, and eat : moreover, know  
How that thy great work even to-day is done.

Sir, thy great ship is finished, and the folk  
(For I, according to thy will, have paid  
All that was left us to them for their wage)  
Have brought, as to a storehouse, flour of wheat,  
Honey and oil—much victual ; yea, and fruits,  
Curtains and household gear. And, sir, they say  
It is thy will to take it for thy hold  
Our fastness and abode.’ He answered, ‘ Yea,  
Else wherefore was it built ? ’ She said, ‘ Good sir,  
I pray you make us not the whole earth’s scorn.  
And now, to-morrow in thy father’s house  
Is a great feast, and weddings are toward ;  
Let be the ship, till after, for thy words  
Have ever been, “ If God shall send a flood,  
There will I dwell ; ” I pray you therefore wait  
At least till He *DOETH* send it.’

And he turned,  
And answered nothing. Now the sun was low  
While yet she spake ; and Japhet came to them  
In goodly raiment, and upon his arm  
The garment of betrothal. And with that  
A noise, and then brake in a woman slave  
And Amarant. This, with folding of her hands,  
Did say full meekly, ‘ If I do offend,  
Yet have not I been willing to offend ;  
For now this woman will not be denied  
Herself to tell her errand.’

And they sat.

Then spoke the woman, ' If I do offend,  
 Pray you forgive the bondslave, for her tongue  
 Is for her mistress. "Lo," my mistress saith,  
 "Put off thy bravery, bridegroom ; fold away,  
 Mother, thy webs of pride, thy costly robes  
 Woven of many colours. We have heard  
 Thy master. Lo, to-day right evil things  
 He prophesied to us, that were his friends ;  
 Therefore, my answer :—God do so to me ;  
 Yea, God do so to me, more also, more  
 Than he did threaten, if my damsel's foot  
 Ever draw nigh thy door."

And when she heard,  
 Niloiya sat amazed, in grief of soul.  
 But Japhet came unto the slave, where low  
 She bowed herself for fear. He said, ' Depart ;  
 Say to thy mistress, "It is well." ' With that  
 She turned herself, and she made haste to flee,  
 Lest any, for those evil words she brought,  
 Would smite her. But the bondmaid of the house  
 Lift up her hand and said, ' If I offend,  
 It was not of my heart : thy damsel knew  
 Nought of this matter.' And he held to her  
 His hand and touched her, and said, ' Amarant !'  
 And when she looked upon him, she did take  
 And spread before her face her radiant locks,  
 Trembling. And Japhet said, ' Lift up thy face,  
 O fairest of the daughters, thy fair face :



For, lo ! the bridegroom standeth with the robe  
Of thy betrothal !'— and he took her locks  
In his two hands to part them from her brow,  
And laid them on her shoulders ; and he said,  
'Sweet are the blushes of thy face,' and put  
The robe upon her, having said, 'Behold,  
I have repented me ; and oft by night,  
In the waste wilderness, while all things slept,  
I thought upon thy words, for they were sweet.

'For this I make thee free. And now thyself  
Art loveliest in mine eyes ; I look, and lo !  
'Thou art of beauty more than any thought  
I had concerning thee. Let, then, this robe,  
Wrought on with imagery of fruitful bough,  
And graceful leaf, and birds with tender eyes,  
Cover the ripples of thy tawny hair.'  
So when she held her peace, he brought her nigh  
To hear the speech of wedlock ; ay, he took  
The golden cup of wine to drink with her,  
And laid the sheaf upon her arms. He said,  
'Like as my fathers in the older days  
Led home the daughters whom they chose, do I ;  
Like as they said, " Mine honour have I set  
Upon thy head ! " do I. Eat of my bread,  
Rule in my house, be mistress of my slaves,  
And mother of my children.'

And he brought

The damsel to his father, saying, 'Behold  
My wife! I have betrothed her to myself;  
I pray you, kiss her.' And the Master did:  
He said, 'Be mother of a multitude,  
And let them to their father even so  
Be found, as he is found to me.'

With that  
She answered, 'Let this woman, sir, find grace  
And favour in your sight.'

And Japhet said,  
'Sweet mother, I have wed the maid ye chose  
And brought me first. I leave her in thy hand;  
Have care on her, till I shall come again  
And ask her of thee.' So they went apart,  
He and his father, to the marriage feast.

## BOOK IX.

THE prayer of Noah. The man went forth by night  
And listened ; and the earth was dark and still,  
And he was driven of his great distress  
Into the forest ; but the birds of night  
Sang sweetly ; and he fell upon his face,  
And cried, ' God, God ! Thy billows and Thy waves  
Have swallowed up my soul.

Where is my God?

For I have somewhat yet to plead with Thee ;  
For I have walked the strands of Thy great deep,  
Heard the dull thunder of its rage afar,  
And its dread moaning. Oh, the field is sweet—  
Spare it. The delicate woods make white their trees  
With blossom—spare them. Life is sweet ; behold,  
There is much cattle, and the wild and tame,  
Father, do feed in quiet—spare them.

God !

Where is my God ? The long wave doth not rear  
Her ghostly crest to lick the forest up,  
And like a chief in battle fall—not yet.  
The lightnings pour not down, from ragged holes

In heaven, the torment of their forkèd tongues,  
 And, like fell serpents, dart and sting—not yet.  
 The winds awake not, with their awful wings  
 To winnow, even as chaff, from out their track,  
 All that withstandeth, and bring down the pride  
 Of all things strong and all things high—

Not yet.

Oh, let it not be yet. Where is my God?  
 How am I saved, if I and mine be saved  
 Alone? I am not saved, for I have loved  
 My country and my kin. Must I, Thy thrall,  
 Over their lands be lord when they are gone?  
 I would not : spare them, Mighty. Spare Thyself,  
 For Thou dost love them greatly,—and if not . . .'

Another praying unremote, a Voice  
 Calm as the solitude between wide stars.

'Where is my God, who loveth this lost world—  
 Lost from its place and name, but won for Thee?  
 Where is my multitude, my multitude,  
 That I shall gather?' And white smoke went up  
 From incense that was burning, but there gleamed  
 No light of fire, save dimly to reveal  
 The whiteness rising, as the prayer of him  
 That mourned. 'My God, appear for me, appear;  
 Give me my multitude, for it is mine.  
 The bitterness of death I have not feared,

To-morrow shall Thy courts, O God, be full.  
 Then shall the captive from his bonds go free,  
 Then shall the thrall find rest, that knew not rest  
 From labour and from blows. The sorrowful—  
 That said of joy, “What is it?” and of songs,  
 “We have not heard them”—shall be glad and sing;  
 Then shall the little ones that knew not Thee,  
 And such as heard not of Thee, see Thy face,  
 And seeing, dwell content.’

The prayer of Noah.

He cried out in the darkness, ‘Hear, O God,  
 Hear HIM : hear this one ; through the gates of death,  
 If life be all past praying for, O give  
 To Thy great multitude a way to peace ;  
 Give them to HIM.

But yet,’ said he, ‘O yet,  
 If there be respite for the terrible,  
 The proud, yea, such as scorn Thee—and if not . . .  
 Let not mine eyes behold their fall.’

He cried,  
 ‘Forgive. I have not done Thy work, Great Judge,  
 With a perfect heart ; I have but half believed,  
 While in accustomed language I have warned ;  
 And now there is no more to do, no place  
 For my repentance, yea, no hour remains  
 For doing of that work again. Oh, lost,

---

Lost world !' And while he prayed, the daylight  
dawned.

And Noah went up into the ship, and sat  
Before the Lord. And all was still ; and now  
In that great quietness the sun came up,  
And there were marks across it, as it were  
The shadow of a Hand upon the sun—  
Three fingers dark and dread, and afterward  
There rose a white thick mist, that peacefully  
Folded the fair earth in her funeral shroud,  
The earth that gave no token, save that now  
There fell a little trembling under foot.

And Noah went down, and took and hid his face  
Behind his mantle, saying, ' I have made  
Great preparation, and it may be yet,  
Beside my house, whom I did charge to come  
This day to meet me, there may enter in  
Many that yesternight thought scorn of all  
My bidding.' And because the fog was thick,  
He said, ' Forbid it, Heaven, if such there be,  
That they should miss the way.' And even then  
There was a noise of weeping and lament ;  
The words of them that were affrighted, yea,  
And cried for grief of heart. There came to him  
The mother and her children, and they cried,  
' Speak, father, what is this? What hast thou done?'

And when he lifted up his face, he saw  
 Japhet, his well-belovèd, where he stood  
 Apart ; and Amarant leaned upon his breast  
 And hid her face, for she was sore afraid  
 And lo ! the robes of her betrothal gleamed  
 White in the deadly gloom.

And at his feet

The wives of his two other sons did kneel,  
 And wring their hands.

One cried, ' O, speak to us ;  
 We are affrighted ; we have dreamed a dream,  
 Each to herself. For me, I saw in mine  
 The grave old angels, like to shepherds, walk,  
 Much cattle following them. Thy daughter looked,  
 And they did enter here.'

The other lay

And moaned, ' Alas ! O father, for my dream  
 Was evil : lo, I heard when it was dark,  
 I heard two wicked ones contend for me.  
 One said, " And wherefore should this woman live,  
 When only for her children, and for her,  
 Are woe and degradation ? " Then he laughed,  
 The other crying, " Let alone, O prince ;  
 Hinder her not to live and bear much seed,  
 Because I hate her.' '

But he said, ' Rise up,  
 Daughters of Noah, for I have learned no words



To comfort you.' Then spake her lord to her,  
'Peace! or I swear that for thy dream, myself  
Will hate thee also.'

And Niloiya said,  
'My sons, if one of you will hear my words,  
Go now, look out, and tell me of the day,  
How fares it?'

And the fateful darkness grew.  
But Shem went up to do his mother's will ;  
And all was one as though the frightened earth  
Quivered and fell a-trembling ; then they hid  
Their faces every one, till he returned,  
And spake not. 'Nay,' they cried, 'what hast thou  
seen?  
Oh, is it come to this?' He answered them,  
'The door is shut.'





*SAILING BEYOND SEAS.*

*(Old Style.)*

**M**ETHOUGHT the stars were blinking  
bright,  
And the old brig's sails unfurled ;  
I said, ' I will sail to my love this night  
At the other side of the world.'  
I stepped aboard—we sailed so fast—  
The sun shot up from the bourne ;  
But a dove that perched upon the mast  
Did mourn, and mourn, and mourn.  
' O fair dove ! O fond dove !  
And dove with the white breast,  
Let me alone, the dream is my own,  
And my heart is full of rest.

' My true love fares on this great hill,  
Feeding his sheep for aye ;'  
I looked in his hut, but all was still,  
My love was gone away.  
I went to gaze in the forest creek,  
And the dove mourned on apace ;  
No flame did flash, nor fair blue reek  
Rose up to show me his place.  
' O last love ! O first love !  
My love with the true heart,  
To think I have come to this your home,  
And yet—we are apart !'

My love ! He stood at my right hand,  
His eyes were grave and sweet.  
Methought he said, ' In this far land,  
O, is it thus we meet !  
Ah, maid most dear, I am not here ;  
I have no place—no part—  
No dwelling more by sea or shore,  
But only in thy heart.'  
O fair dove ! O fond dove !  
Till night rose over the bourne,  
The dove on the mast, as we sailed fast,  
Did mourn, and mourn, and mourn.



*REMONSTRANCE.*

II

**D**AUGHTERS of Eve ! your mother did not  
well :

She laid the apple in your father's hand,  
And we have read, O wonder ! what befel—  
The man was not deceived, nor yet could stand ;  
He chose to lose, for love of her, his throne—  
With her could die, but could not live alone.

Daughters of Eve ! he did not fall so low,  
Nor fall so far, as that sweet woman fell ;  
For something better, than as gods to know,  
That husband in that home left off to dwell :  
For this, till love be reckoned, less than lore,  
Shall man be first and best for evermore.

Daughters of Eve ! it was for your dear sake  
The world's first hero died an uncrown'd king ;  
But God's great pity touched the grand mistake,  
And made his married love a sacred thing :  
For yet his nobler sons, if aught be true,  
Find the lost Eden in their love to you.





*SONG FOR THE NIGHT OF CHRIST'S  
RESURRECTION.*

*(A Humble Imitation.)*

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\*And birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.\*

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**I**T is the noon of night,  
And the world's Great Light  
Gone out, she widow-like doth carry her  
The moon hath veiled her face,  
Nor looks on that dread place  
Where He lieth dead in sealèd sepulchre ;  
And heaven and hades, emptied, lend  
Their flocking multitudes to watch and wait the end.

Tier above tier they rise,  
Their wings new line the skies,  
And shed out comforting light among the stars ;  
But they of the other place  
The heavenly signs deface,  
The gloomy brand of hell their brightness mars ;  
Yet high they sit in thronèd state—  
It is the hour of darkness to them dedicate.

And first and highest set,  
Where the black shades are met,  
The lord of night and hades leans him down ;  
His gleaming eyeballs show  
More awful than the glow,  
Which hangeth by the points of his dread crown ;  
And at his feet, where lightnings play,  
The fatal sisters sit and weep, and curse their day.

Lo ! one, with eyes all wide,  
As she were sight denied,  
Sits blindly feeling at her distaff old ;  
One, as distraught with woe,  
Letting the spindle go,  
Her star-ysprinkled gown doth shivering fold ;  
And one right mournful hangs her head,  
Complaining, ' Woe is me ! I may not cut the thread.

' All men of every birth,  
Yea, great ones of the earth,  
Kings and their councillors, have I drawn down ;  
But I am held of Thee,—  
Why dost Thou trouble me,  
To bring me up, dead King, that keep'st Thy crown ?  
Yet for all courtiers hast but ten  
Lowly, unlettered, Galilean fishermen,



‘ Olympian heights are bare  
 Of whom men worshipped there,  
 Immortal feet their snows may print no more ;  
 Their stately powers below  
 Lie desolate, nor know  
 This thirty years Thessalian grove or shore ;  
 But I am elder far than they ;—  
 Where is the sentence writ that I must pass away ?

‘ Art thou come up for this,  
 Dark regent, awful Dis ?  
 And hast thou moved the deep to mark our ending ?  
 And stirred the dens beneath,  
 To see us eat of death,  
 With all the scoffing heavens toward us bending ?  
 Help ! powers of ill, see not us die !’  
 But neither demon dares, nor angel deigns, reply.

Her sisters, fallen on sleep,  
 Fade in the upper deep,  
 And their grim lord sits on, in doleful trance ;  
 Till her black veil she rends,  
 And with her death-shriek bends  
 Downward the terrors of her countenance ;  
 Then, whelmed in night and no more seen,  
 They leave the world a doubt if ever such have been.

And the winged armies twain  
Their awful watch maintain ;  
They mark the earth at rest with her Great Dead  
Behold, from antres wide,  
Green Atlas heave his side ;  
His moving woods their scarlet clusters shed,  
The swathing coif his front that cools,  
And tawny lions lapping at his palm-edged pools.

Then like a heap of snow,  
Lying where grasses grow,  
See glimmering, while the moony lustres creep,  
Mild-mannered Athens, dight  
In dewy marbles white,  
Among her goddesses and gods asleep ;  
And swaying on a purple sea,  
The many moored galleys clustering at her quay.

Also, 'neath palm trees' shade,  
Amid their camels laid,  
The pastoral tribes with all their flocks at rest ;  
Like to those old-world folk,  
With whom two angels broke  
The bread of men at Abram's courteous 'quest,  
When, listening as they prophesied,  
His desert princess, being reproved, her laugh denied.

Or from the Morians' land  
See worshipped Nilus bland,  
Taking the silver road he gave the world,  
To wet his ancient shrine  
With waters held divine,  
And touch his temple steps with wavelets curled,  
And list, ere darkness change to grey,  
Old minstrel-throated Memnon chanting in the day.

Moreover, Indian glades,  
Where kneel the sun-swart maids,  
On Gunga's flood their votive flowers to throw,  
And launch i' the sultry night  
Their burning cressets bright,  
Most like a fleet of stars that southing go,  
Till on her bosom prosperously  
She floats them shining forth to sail the lullèd sea.

Nor bend they not their eyne  
Where the watch-fires shine,  
By shepherds fed, on hills of Bethlehem :  
They mark, in goodly wise,  
The city of David rise,  
The gates and towers of rare Jerusalem ;  
And hear the 'scapèd Kedron fret,  
And night dews dropping from the leaves of Olivet.

But now the setting moon  
To curtained lands must soon,  
In her obedient fashion, minister ;  
She first, as loth to go,  
Lets her last silver flow  
Upon her Master's sealèd sepulchre ;  
And trees that in the garden spread,  
She kisseth all for sake of His low-lying head,

Then 'neath the rim goes down ;  
And night with darker frown  
Sinks on the fateful garden watchèd long ;  
When some despairing eyes,  
Far in the murky skies,  
The unwishèd waking by their gloom foretell ;  
And blackness up the welkin swings,  
And drinks the mild effulgence from celestial wings.

Last, with amazèd cry,  
The hosts asunder fly,  
Leaving an empty gulf of blackest hue ;  
Whence straightway shooteth down,  
By the Great Father thrown,  
A mighty angel, strong and dread to view ;  
And at his fall the rocks are rent,  
The waiting world doth quake with mortal tremblement ;

The regions far and near  
Quail with a pause of fear,  
More terrible than aught since time began ;  
The winds, that dare not fleet,  
Drop at his awful feet,  
And in its bed wails the wide ocean ;  
The flower of dawn forbears to blow,  
And the oldest running river cannot skill to flow.

At stand, by that dread place,  
He lifts his radiant face,  
And looks to heaven with reverent love and fear ;  
Then, while the welkin quakes,  
And muttering thunder breaks,  
And lightnings shoot and ominous meteors drear,  
And all the daunted earth doth moan,  
He from the doors of death rolls back the sealed stone.—

—In regal quiet deep,  
Lo, One new waked from sleep !  
Behold, He standeth in the rock-hewn door !  
Thy children shall not die—  
Peace, peace, thy Lord is by !  
He liveth !—they shall live for evermore.  
Peace ! lo, He lifts a priestly hand,  
And blesseth all the sons of men in every land

Then, with great dread and wail,  
Fall down, like storms of hail,  
The legions of the lost in fearful wise ;  
And they whose blissful race  
Peoples the better place,  
Lift up their wings to cover their fair eyes,  
And through the waxing saffron brede,  
Till they are lost in light, recede, and yet recede.

So while the fields are dim,  
And the red sun his rim  
First heaves, in token of his reign benign,  
All stars the most admired,  
Into their blue retired,  
Lie hid—the faded moon forgets to shine,—  
And, hurrying down the sphyry way,  
Night flies, and sweeps her shadow from the paths of day.

But look ! the Saviour blest,  
Calm after solemn rest,  
Stands in the garden 'neath His olive boughs ;  
The earliest smile of day  
Doth on His vesture play,  
And light the majesty of His still brows ;  
While angels hang with wings outspread,  
Holding the new-won crown above His saintly head.



*WITH A DIAMOND.*

**W**HILE Time a grim old lion gnawing lay,  
And mumbled with his teeth yon regal  
tomb,  
Like some immortal tear undimmed for aye,  
This gem was dropped among the dust of doom.

Dropped, haply, by a sad, forgotten queen,  
A tear to outlast name, and fame, and tongue :  
Her other tears, and ours, all tears terrene,  
For great new griefs to be hereafter sung.

Take it,—a goddess might have wept such tears,  
Or Dame Electra changed into a star,  
That waxed so dim because her children's years  
In 'leaguered Troy were bitter through long war.

Not till the end to end grow dull or waste,—  
Ah, what a little while the light we share !  
Hand after hand shall yet with this be graced,  
Signing the Will that leaves it to an heir.





*SONG OF MARGARET.*



Y, I saw her, we have met,—  
Married eyes how sweet they be—  
Are you happier, Margaret,  
Than you might have been with me?  
Silence ! make no more ado !  
Did she think I should forget ?  
Matters nothing, though I knew,  
Margaret, Margaret.

Once those eyes, full sweet, full shy,  
Told a certain thing to mine ;  
What they told me I put by,  
O, so careless of the sign.  
Such an easy thing to take,  
And I did not want it then ;  
Fool ! I wish my heart would break,  
Scorn is hard on hearts of men.

Scorn of self is bitter work—  
Each of us has felt it now :  
Bluest skies she counted mirk,  
Self-betrayed of eyes and brow ;  
As for me, I went my way,  
And a better man drew nigh,  
Fain to earn, with long essay,  
What the winner's hand threw by.

Matters not in deserts old,  
What was born, and waxed, and yearned,  
Year to year its meaning told,  
I am come—its deeps are learned—  
Come, but there is nought to say,—  
Married eyes with mine have met.  
Silence ! O, I had my day,  
Margaret, Margaret.





*SONG OF THE GOING AWAY.*



OLD man, upon the green hill-side,  
With yellow flowers besprinkled o'er,  
How long in silence wilt thou bide  
At this low stone door?

‘I stoop : within ’t is dark and still ;  
But shadowy paths methinks there be,  
And lead they far into the hill ?’  
‘ Traveller, come and see.’

‘T is dark, ’t is cold, and hung with gloom ;  
I care not now within to stay ;  
For thee and me is scarcely room,  
I will hence away.’

‘ Not so, not so, thou youthful guest,  
Thy foot shall issue forth no more  
Behold the chamber of thy rest,  
And the closing door !’

‘ Oh ! have I ’scaped the whistling ball,  
And striven on smoky fields of fight,  
And scaled the ’leaguèred city’s wall  
In the dangerous night ;

‘ And borne my life unharmèd still  
Through foaming gulfs of yeasty spray,  
To yield it on a grassy hill  
At the noon of day ? ’

‘ Peace ! Say thy prayers, and go to sleep,  
Till *SOME TIME*, *ONE* my seal shall break  
And deep shall answer unto deep,  
When He crieth, “ *AWAKE !* ” ’





*A LILY AND A LUTE.*

*(Song of the uncommunicated Ideal.)*

I



OPENED the eyes of my soul.

And behold,

A white river-lily: a lily awake, and aware—  
For she set her face upward— aware how in  
scarlet and gold

A long wrinkled cloud, left behind of the wandering air,  
Lay over with fold upon fold,  
With fold upon fold.

And the blushing sweet shame of the cloud made her  
also ashamed,

The white river-lily, that suddenly knew she was fair ;  
And over the far-away mountains that no man hath  
named,

And that no foot hath trod,

Flung down out of heavenly places, there fell, as it were,  
A rose-bloom, a token of love, that should make them  
    endure,  
Withdrawn in snow silence for ever, who keep themselves  
    pure,  
    And look up to God.

Then I said, ' In rosy air,  
Cradled on thy reaches fair,  
While the blushing early ray  
Whitens into perfect day,  
River-lily, sweetest known,  
Art thou set for me alone ?  
Nay, but I will bear thee far,  
Where yon clustering steeples are,  
And the bells ring out o'erhead,  
And the stated prayers are said ;  
And the busy farmers pace,  
Trading in the market place ;  
And the country lasses sit  
By their butter, praising it ;  
And the latest news is told,  
While the fruit and cream are sold ;  
And the friendly gossips greet,  
Up and down the sunny street.  
For,' I said, ' I have not met,  
White one, any folk as yet

Who would send no blessing up,  
Looking on a face like thine ;  
For thou art as Joseph's cup,  
And by thee might they divine.

'Nay ! but thou a spirit art ;  
Men shall take thee in the mart  
For the ghost of their best thought,  
Raised at noon, and near them brought ;  
Or the prayer they made last night,  
Set before them all in white.'

And I put out my rash hand,  
For I thought to draw to land  
The white lily. Was it fit  
Such a blossom should expand,  
Fair enough for a world's wonder,  
And no mortal gather it ?  
No. I strove, and it went under,  
And I drew, but it went down ;  
And the waterweeds' long tresses,  
And the overlapping cresses,  
Sullied its admirèd crown.  
Then along the river strand,  
Trailing, wrecked, it came to land,  
Of its beauty half despoiled,  
And its snowy pureness soiled :



O! I took it in my hand,—  
You will never see it now,  
White and golden as it grew :  
No, I cannot show it you,  
Nor the cheerful town endow  
With the freshness of its brow.

If a royal painter, great  
With the colours dedicate  
To a dove's neck, a sea-bight,  
And the flickerings over white  
Mountain summits far away—  
One content to give his mind  
To the enrichment of mankind,  
And the laying up of light  
In men's houses—on that day,  
Could he have passed in kingly mood,  
Would he ever have endued  
Canvas with the peerless thing,  
In the grace that it did bring,  
And the light that o'er it flowed,  
With the pureness that it showed,  
And the pureness that it meant?  
Could he skill to make it seen  
As he saw? For this, I ween,  
He were likewise impotent.

## II

I opened the doors of my heart.

And behold,

There was music within and a song,

And echoes did feed on the sweetness, repeating it long.

I opened the doors of my heart : and behold,

There was music that played itself out in eolian notes ;

Then was heard, as a far-away bell at long intervals toll'd,

That murmurs and floats,

And presently dieth, forgotten of forest and wold,

And comes in all passion again, and a tremblement soft,

That maketh the listener full oft

To whisper, ' Ah ! would I might hear it for ever and aye,

When I toil in the heat of the day,

When I walk in the cold.'

I opened the door of my heart. And behold,

There was music within and a song.

But while I was hearkening, lo, blackness without, thick  
and strong,

Came up and came over, and all that sweet fluting was  
drowned,

I could hear it no more ;

For the welkin was moaning, the waters were stirred on  
the shore,

And trees in the dark all around

Were shaken. It thundered. ' Hark, hark ! there is  
thunder to-night !

The sullen long wave rears her head, and comes down  
with a will ;  
The awful white tongues are let loose, and the stars are  
all dead ;—  
There is thunder ! it thunders ! and ladders of light  
Run up. 'There is thunder !' I said,  
'Loud thunder ! it thunders ! and up in the dark overhead,  
A down-pouring cloud, (there is thunder !) a down-  
pouring cloud  
Hails out her fierce message, and quivers the deep in its  
bed,  
And covers the earth held at bay ; and they mutter aloud,  
And pause with an ominous tremble, till, great in their rage,  
The heavens and earth come together, and meet with a  
crash ;  
And the fight is so fell as if Time had come down with  
the flash,  
And the story of life was all read,  
And the Giver had turned the last page.

'Now their bar the pent water-floods lash,  
And the forest trees give out their language austere with  
great age ;  
And there flieth o'er moor and o'er hill,  
And there heaveth at intervals wide,  
The long sob of nature's great passion as loth to subside,  
Until quiet drop down on the tide,  
And mad Echo hath moaned herself still.'

Lo ! or ever I was 'ware,  
In the silence of the air,  
Through my heart's wide-open door,  
Music floated forth once more,  
Floated to the world's dark rim,  
And looked over with a hymn ;  
Then came home with flutings fine,  
And discoursed in tones divine  
Of a certain grief of mine ;  
And went downward and went in,  
Glimpses of my soul to win,  
And discovered such a deep  
That I could not choose but weep,  
For it lay, a land-locked sea,  
Fathomless and dim to me.

O, the song ! it came and went,  
Went and came.

I have not learned  
Half the lore whereto it yearned,  
Half the magic that it meant,  
Water booming in a cave ;  
Or the swell of some long wave,  
Setting in from unrevealed  
Countries ; or a foreign tongue,  
Sweetly talked and deftly sung,  
While the meaning is half sealed ;  
May be like it. You have heard

Also ;—can you find a word  
For the naming of such song ?  
No ; a name would do it wrong.  
You have heard it in the night,  
In the dropping rain's despite,  
In the midnight darkness deep,  
When the children were asleep,  
And the wife—no, let that be ;  
SHE asleep ! She knows right well  
What the song to you and me,  
While we breathe, can never tell ;  
She hath heard its faultless flow,  
Where the roots of music grow.

While I listened, like young birds,  
Hints were fluttering ; almost words—  
Leaned and leaned, and nearer came ;—  
Everything had changed its name.

Sorrow was a ship, I found,  
Wrecked with them that in her are,  
On an island richer far  
Than the port where they were bound.  
Fear was but the awful boom  
Of the old great bell of doom,  
Tolling, far from earthly air,  
For all worlds to go to prayer.

Pain, that to us mortal clings,  
But the pushing of our wings,  
That we have no use for yet,  
And the uprooting of our feet  
From the soil where they are set,  
And the land we reckon sweet.  
Love in growth, the grand deceit  
Whereby men the perfect greet ;  
Love in wane, the blessing sent  
To be (howsoe'er it went)  
Never more with earth content.

O, full sweet, and O, full high,  
Ran that music up the sky ;  
But I cannot sing it you,  
More than I can make you view,  
With my paintings labial,  
Sitting up in awful row,  
White old men majestic,  
Mountains, in their gowns of snow,  
Ghosts of kings ; as my two eyes,  
Looking over speckled skies,  
See them now. About their knees,  
Half in haze, there stands at ease  
A great army of green hills,  
Some bareheaded ; and, behold,  
Small green mosses creep on some.  
Those be mighty forests old ;

And white avalanches come  
Through yon rents, where now distils  
Sheeny silver, pouring down  
To a tune of old renown,  
Cutting narrow pathways through  
Gentian belts of airy blue,  
To a zone where starwort blows,  
And long reaches of the rose.

So, that haze all left behind,  
Down the chestnut forests wind,  
Past yon jagged spires, where yet  
Foot of man was never set ;  
Past a castle yawning wide,  
With a great breach in its side,  
'To a nest-like valley, where,  
Like a sparrow's egg in hue,  
Lie two lakes, and teach the true  
Colour of the sea-maid's hair.

What beside? The world beside !  
Drawing down and down, to greet  
Cottage clusters at our feet—  
Every scent of summer tide—  
Flowery pastures all aglow ;  
(Men and women mowing go  
Up and down them) ; also soft



Floating of the film aloft,  
Fluttering of the leaves alow.  
Is this told? It is not told.  
Where 's the danger? where 's the cold  
Slippery danger up the steep?  
Where yon shadow fallen asleep?  
Chirping bird and tumbling spray,  
Light, work, laughter, scent of hay,  
Peace, and echo, where are they?

Ah, they sleep, sleep all untold ;  
Memory must their grace enfold  
Silently ; and that high song  
Of the heart, it doth belong  
To the hearers. Not a whit,  
Though a chief musician heard,  
Could he make a tune for it.

Though a bird of sweetest throat,  
And some lute full clear of note,  
Could have tried it—O, the lute  
For that wondrous song were mute,  
And the bird would do her part,  
Falter, fail, and break her heart—  
Break her heart, and furl her wings  
On those inexpressive strings.



*THE LONG WHITE SEAM.*

**A**S I came round the harbour buoy,  
The lights began to gleam,  
No wave the land-locked water stirred,  
The crags were white as cream ;  
And I marked my love by candle-light  
Sewing her long white seam.  
It's aye sewing ashore, my dear,  
Watch and steer at sea,  
It's reef and furl, and haul the line,  
Set sail and think of thee.

I climbed to reach her cottage door ;  
O sweetly my love sings !  
Like a shaft of light her voice breaks forth,  
My soul to meet it springs  
As the shining water leaped of old,  
When stirred by angel wings.

Aye longing to list anew,  
Awake and in my dream,  
But never a song she sang like this,  
Sewing her long white seam.

Fair fall the lights, the harbour lights,  
That brought me in to thee,  
And peace drop down on that low roof  
For the sight that I did see,  
And the voice, my dear, that rang so clear  
All for the love of me.

For O, for O, with brows bent low  
By the candle's flickering gleam,  
Her wedding gown it was she wrought,  
Sewing the long white seam.





*NOT IN VAIN I WAITED.*

**S**HE was but a child, a child,  
And I a man grown ;  
Sweet she was, and fresh, and wild,  
And, I thought, my own.

What could I do? The long grass groweth,  
The long wave floweth with a murmur on :  
The why and the wherefore of it all who knoweth?  
Ere I thought to lose her she was grown—and gone.  
This day or that day in warm spring weather,  
The lamb that was tame will yearn to break its tether.  
'But if the world wound thee,' I said, 'come back to me,  
Down in the dell wishing—wishing, wishing for thee.'

The dews hang on the white may,  
Like a ghost it stands,  
All in the dusk before day  
That folds the dim lands :

Dark fell the skies when once belated,

Sad, and sorrow-fated, I missed the sun ;

But wake, heart, and sing, for not in vain I waited.

O clear, O solemn dawning, lo, the maid is won !

Sweet dews, dry early on the grass and clover,

Lest the bride wet her feet while she walks over ;

Shine to-day, sunbeams, and make all fair to see :

Down the dell she 's coming—coming, coming with me.





*THE SNOWDROP MONUMENT (IN LICH-  
FIELD CATHEDRAL).*

**M**ARVELS of sleep grown cold !  
Who hath not longed to fold  
With pitying ruth, forgetful of their bliss,  
Those cherub forms that lie,  
With none to watch them nigh,  
Or touch the silent lips with one warm human kiss ?

What ! they are left alone  
All night with graven stone,  
Pillars and arches that above them meet ;  
While through those windows high  
The journeying stars can spy,  
And dim blue moonbeams drop on their uncovered feet !

O cold ! yet look again,  
There is a wandering vein  
Traced in the hand where those white snowdrops lie.  
Let her rapt dreamy smile  
The wondering heart beguile,  
That almost thinks to hear a calm contented sigh.

What silence dwells between  
Those severed lips serene !  
The rapture of sweet waiting breathes and grows ;  
What trance-like peace is shed  
On her reclining head,  
And e'en on listless feet what languor of repose !

Angels of joy and love  
Lean softly from above  
And whisper to her sweet and marvellous things ;  
Tell of the golden gate  
That opened wide doth wait,  
And shadow her dim sleep with their celestial wings.

Hearing of that blest shore  
She thinks on earth no more,  
Contented to forego this wintry land.  
She hath nor thought nor care  
But to rest calmly there,  
And hold the snowdrops pale that blossom in her hand.



But on the other face  
Broodeth a mournful grace,  
This had foreboding thoughts beyond her years,  
While sinking thus to sleep  
She saw her mother weep,  
And could not lift her hand to dry those heart-sick tears.

Could not—but failing lay,  
Sighed her young life away,  
And let her arm drop down in listless rest,  
Too weary on that bed  
To turn her dying head,  
Or fold the little sister nearer to her breast.

Yet this is faintly told  
On features fair and cold,  
A look of calm surprise, of mild regret,  
As if with life oppressed  
She turned her to her rest,  
But felt her mother's love and looked not to forget.

How wistfully they close,  
Sweet eyes, to their repose !  
How quietly declines the placid brow !  
The young lips seem to say,  
' I have wept much to-day,  
And felt some bitter pains, but they are over now.'

Sleep ! there are left below  
Many who pine to go,  
Many who lay it to their chastened souls,  
That gloomy days draw nigh,  
And they are blest who die,  
For this green world grows worse the longer that she rolls.

And as for me, I know  
A little of her woe,  
Her yearning want doth in my soul abide,  
And sighs of them that weep,  
' O put us soon to sleep,  
For when we wake—with Thee—we shall be satisfied.'





*COLD AND QUIET.*

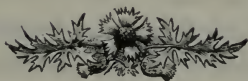


OLD, my dear,—cold and quiet.  
In their cups on yonder lea,  
Cowslips fold the brown bee's diet ;  
So the moss enfoldeth thee.  
' Plant me, plant me, O love, a lily flower—  
Plant at my head, I pray you, a green tree ;  
And when our children sleep,' she sighed, 'at the dusk  
hour,  
And when the lily blossoms, O come out to me !'

Lost, my dear? Lost ! nay, deepest  
Love is that which loseth least ;  
Through the night-time while thou sleepest,  
Still I watch the shrouded east.  
Near thee, near thee, my wife that aye liveth,  
' Lost ' is no word for such a love as mine ;  
Love from her past to me a present giveth,  
And love itself doth comfort, making pain divine

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Rest, my dear, rest. Fair showeth  
That which was, and not in vain :  
Sacred have I kept, God knoweth,  
Love's last words atween us twain.  
' Hold by our past, my only love, my lover ;  
Fall not, but rise, O love, by loss of me !'  
Boughs from our garden, white with bloom hang over.  
Love, now the children slumber, I come out to thee.





*GLADYS AND HER ISLAND.*

(ON THE ADVANTAGES OF THE POETICAL TEMPERAMENT.)

*An Imperfect Fable with a Doubtful Moral.*



HAPPY Gladys ! I rejoice with her,  
For Gladys saw the island.

It was thus :

They gave a day for pleasure in the school  
Where Gladys taught ; and all the other girls  
Were taken out, to picnic in a wood.  
But it was said, ‘ We think it were not well  
That little Gladys should acquire a taste  
For pleasure, going about, and needless change.  
It would not suit her station : discontent  
Might come of it ; and all her duties now  
She does so pleasantly, that we were best  
To keep her humble.’ So they said to her,  
‘ Gladys, we shall not want you all to-day.  
Look, you are free ; you need not sit at work :  
No, you may take a long and pleasant walk

Over the sea-cliff, or upon the beach  
Among the visitors.'

Then Gladys blushed  
For joy, and thanked them. What ! a holiday,  
A whole one, for herself ! How good, how kind !  
With that, the marshalled carriages drove off ;  
And Gladys, sobered with her weight of joy,  
Stole out beyond the groups upon the beach—  
The children with their wooden spades, the band  
That played for lovers, and the sunny stir  
Of cheerful life and leisure—to the rocks,  
For these she wanted most, and there was time  
To mark them ; how like ruined organs prone  
They lay, or leaned their giant fluted pipes,  
And let the great white-crested reckless wave  
Beat out their booming melody.

The sea  
Was filled with light ; in clear blue caverns curled  
The breakers, and they ran, and seemed to romp,  
As playing at some rough and dangerous game,  
While all the nearer waves rushed in to help,  
And all the farther heaved their heads to peep,  
And tossed the fishing boats. Then Gladys laughed,  
And said, ' O, happy tide, to be so lost  
In sunshine, that one dare not look at it ;  
And lucky cliffs, to be so brown and warm ;  
And yet how lucky are the shadows, too,  
That lurk beneath their ledges. It is strange,

That in remembrance though I lay them up,  
 They are for ever, when I come to them,  
 Better than I had thought. O, something yet  
 I had forgotten. Oft I say, "At least  
 This picture is imprinted; thus and thus,  
 The sharpened serried jags run up, run out,  
 Layer on layer." And I look—up—up—  
 High, higher up again, till far aloft  
 They cut into their æther—brown, and clear,  
 And perfect. And I, saying, "This is mine,  
 To keep," retire; but shortly come again,  
 And they confound me with a glorious change.  
 The low sun out of rain-clouds stares at them;  
 They redden, and their edges drip with—what?  
 I know not, but 't is red. It leaves no stain,  
 For the next morning they stand up like ghosts  
 In a sea-shroud, and fifty thousand mews  
 Sit there, in long white files, and chatter on,  
 Like silly school-girls in their silliest mood.

'There is the boulder where we always turn.  
 O! I have longed to pass it; now I will.  
 What would *THEY* say? for one must slip and spring;  
 "Young ladies! Gladys! I am shocked. My dears,  
 Decorum, if you please: turn back at once.  
 Gladys, we blame you most; you should have looked  
 Before you." Then they sigh—how kind they are!—  
 "What will become of you, if all your life



You look a long way off?—look anywhere,  
And everywhere, instead of at your feet,  
And where they carry you !” Ah, well, I know  
It is a pity,’ Gladys said ; ‘ but then  
We cannot all be wise : happy for me,  
That other people are.

And yet I wish—

For sometimes very right and serious thoughts  
Come to me—I do wish that they would come  
When they are wanted !—when I teach the sums  
On rainy days, and when the practising  
I count to, and the din goes on and on,  
Still the same tune and still the same mistake,  
Then I am wise enough : sometimes I feel  
Quite old. I think that it will last, and say,  
“ Now my reflections do me credit ! now  
I am a woman !” and I wish they knew  
How serious all my duties look to me.  
And how, my heart hushed down and shaded lies,  
Just like the sea when low, convenient clouds,  
Come over, and drink all its sparkles up.  
But does it last? Perhaps, that very day,  
The front door opens : out we walk in pairs ;  
And I am so delighted with this world,  
That suddenly has grown, being new washed,  
To such a smiling, clean, and thankful world,  
And with a tender face shining through tears,  
Looks up into the sometime lowering sky,

That has been angry, but is reconciled,  
 And just forgiving her, that I—that I—  
 O, I forget myself : what matters how !  
 And then I hear (but always kindly said)  
 Some words that pain me so—but just, but true :  
 “ For if your place in this establishment  
 Be but subordinate, and if your birth  
 Be lowly, it the more behoves——well, well,  
 No more. We see that you are sorry.” Yes !  
 I am always sorry THEN ; but now—O, now,  
 Here is a bight more beautiful than all.’

‘ And did they scold her, then, my pretty one ?  
 And did she want to be as wise as they,  
 To bear a bucklered heart and priggish mind ?  
 Ay, you may crow ; she did ! but no, no, no,  
 The night-time will not let her, all the stars  
 Say nay to that—the old sea laughs at her.  
 Why, Gladys is a child ; she has not skill  
 To shut herself within her own small cell,  
 And build the door up, and to say, “ Poor me !  
 I am a prisoner ; ” then to take hewn stones,  
 And, having built the windows up, to say,  
 “ O, it is dark ! there is no sunshine here ;  
 There never has been.” ’

Strange ! how very strange !

A woman passing Gladys with a babe,  
 To whom she spoke these words, and only looked

Upon the babe, who crowed and pulled her curls,  
And never looked at Gladys, never once.  
'A simple child,' she added, and went by,  
'To want to change her greater for their less ;  
But Gladys shall not do it, no, not she ;  
We love her—do n't we?—far too well for that.'

Then Gladys, flushed with shame and keen surprise,  
'How could she be so near, and I not know?  
And have I spoken out my thought aloud?  
I must have done, forgetting. It is well  
She walks so fast, for I am hungry now,  
And here is water cantering down the cliff,  
And here a shell to catch it with, and here  
The round plump buns they gave me, and the fruit.  
Now she is gone behind the rock. O, rare  
To be alone !' So Gladys sat her down,  
Unpacked her little basket, ate and drank,  
Then pushed her hands into the warm dry sand,  
And thought the earth was happy, and she too  
Was going round with it in happiness,  
That holiday. 'What was it that she said?'  
Quoth Gladys, cogitating ; 'they were kind,  
The words that woman spoke. She does not know !  
"Her greater for their less"—it makes me laugh—  
But yet,' sighed Gladys, 'though it must be good  
To look and to admire, one should not wish  
To steal THEIR virtues, and to put them on,

Like feathers from another wing ; beside,  
That calm, and that grave consciousness of worth,  
When all is said, would little suit with me,  
Who am not worthy. When our thoughts are born,  
Though they be good and humble, one should mind  
How they are reared, or some will go astray  
And shame their mother. Cain and Abel both  
Were only once removed from innocence.  
Why did I envy them? That was not good ;  
Yet it began with my humility.'

But as she spake, lo, Gladys raised her eyes,  
And right before her, on the horizon's edge,  
Behold, an island ! First, she looked away  
Along the solid rocks and steadfast shore,  
For she was all amazed, believing not,  
And then she looked again, and there again  
Behold, an island ! And the tide had turned,  
The milky sea had got a purple rim,  
And from the rim that mountain island rose,  
Purple, with two high peaks, the northern peak  
The higher, and with fell and precipice,  
It ran down steeply to the water's brink ;  
But all the southern line was long and soft,  
Broken with tender curves, and, as she thought,  
Covered with forest or with sward. But, look !  
The sun was on the island ; and he showed  
On either peak a dazzling cap of snow.

Then Gladys held her breath ; she said, ' Indeed,  
Indeed it is an island : how is this,  
I never saw it till this fortunate  
Rare holiday ? ' And while she strained her eyes,  
She thought that it began to fade ; but not  
To change as clouds do, only to withdraw  
And melt into its azure ; and at last,  
Little by little, from her hungry heart,  
That longed to draw things marvellous to itself,  
And yearned towards the riches and the great  
Abundance of the beauty God hath made,  
It passed away. Tears started in her eyes,  
And when they dropped, the mountain isle was gone ;  
The careless sea had quite forgotten it,  
And all was even as it had been before.

And Gladys wept, but there was luxury  
In her self-pity, while she softly sobbed,  
' O, what a little while ! I am afraid  
I shall forget that purple mountain isle,  
The lovely hollows atween her snow-clad peaks,  
The grace of her upheaval where she lay  
Well up against the open. O, my heart,  
Now I remember how this holiday  
Will soon be done, and now my life goes on  
Not fed ; and only in the noonday walk  
Let to look silently at what it wants,  
Without the power to wait or pause awhile,

And understand and draw within itself  
The richness of the earth. A holiday !  
How few I have ! I spend the silent time  
At work, while all THEIR pupils are gone home,  
And feel myself remote. They shine apart ;  
They are great planets, I a little orb ;  
My little orbit far within their own  
Turns, and approaches not. But yet, the more  
I am alone when those I teach return ;  
For they, as planets of some other sun,  
Not mine, have paths that can but meet my ring  
Once in a cycle. O, how poor I am !  
I have not got laid up in this blank heart  
Any indulgent kisses given me  
Because I had been good, or, yet more sweet,  
Because my childhood was itself a good  
Attractive thing for kisses, tender praise,  
And comforting. An orphan-school at best  
Is a cold mother in the winter time,  
(’T was mostly winter when new orphans came)  
An unregardful mother in the spring.

‘ Yet once a year (I did mine wrong) we went  
To gather cowslips. How we thought on it  
Beforehand, pacing, pacing the dull street,  
To that one tree, the only one we saw  
From April,—if the cowslips were in bloom  
So early ; or if not, from opening May

Even to September. Then there came the feast  
At Epping. If it rained that day, it rained  
For a whole year to us ; we could not think  
Of fields and hawthorn hedges, and the leaves  
Fluttering, but still it rained, and ever rained.

‘Ah, well, but I am here ; but I have seen  
The gay gorse bushes in their flowering time ;  
I know the scent of bean-fields ; I have heard  
The satisfying murmur of the main.’

The woman ! She came round the rock again  
With her fair baby, and she sat her down  
By Gladys, murmuring, ‘Who forbad the grass  
To grow by visitations of the dew ?  
Who said in ancient time to the desert pool,  
“Thou shalt not wait for angel visitors  
To trouble thy still water ?” Must we bide  
At home ? The lore, beloved, shall fly to us  
On a pair of sumptuous wings. Or may we breathe  
Without ? O, we shall draw to us the air  
That times and mystery feed on. This shall lay  
Unchidden hands upon the heart o’ the world,  
And feel it beating. Rivers shall run on,  
Full of sweet language as a lover’s mouth,  
Delivering of a tune to make her youth  
More beautiful than wheat when it is green.



‘What else?—(O, none shall envy her!) The rain  
And the wild weather will be most her own,  
And talk with her o’ nights; and if the winds  
Have seen aught wondrous, they will tell it her  
In a mouthful of strange moans—will bring from far,  
Her ears being keen, the lowing and the mad  
Masterful tramping of the bison herds,  
Tearing down headlong with their bloodshot eyes,  
In savage rifts of hair; the crack and creak  
Of ice-floes in the frozen sea, the cry  
Of the white bears, all in a dim blue world  
Mumbling their meals by twilight; or the rock  
And majesty of motion, when their heads  
Primeval trees toss in a sunny storm,  
And hail their nuts down on unweeded fields.  
No holidays,’ quoth she; ‘drop, drop, O, drop,  
Thou tirèd skylark, and go up no more;  
You lime trees, cover not your heads with bees,  
Nor give out your good smell. She will not look  
No, Gladys cannot draw your sweetness in,  
For lack of holidays.’ So Gladys thought,  
‘A most strange woman, and she talks of me.’  
With that a girl ran up; ‘Mother,’ she said,  
‘Come out of this brown bight, I pray you now  
It smells of fairies.’ Gladys thereon thought,  
‘The mother will not speak to me, perhaps  
The daughter may,’ and asked her courteously,  
‘What do the fairies smell of?’ But the girl

With peevish pout replied, 'You know, you know.'  
'Not I,' said Gladys; then she answered her,  
'Something like buttercups. But, mother, come,  
And whisper up a porpoise from the foam,  
Because I want to ride.'

Full slowly, then,  
The mother rose, and ever kept her eyes  
Upon her little child. 'You freakish maid,'  
Said she, 'now mark me, if I call you one,  
You shall not scold nor make him take you far.'

'I only want—you know I only want,'  
The girl replied, 'to go and play awhile  
Upon the sand by Lagos.' Then she turned  
And muttered low, 'Mother, is this the girl  
Who saw the island?' But the mother frowned.  
'When may she go to it?' the daughter asked.  
And Gladys, following them, gave all her mind  
To hear the answer. 'When she wills to go;  
For yonder comes to shore the ferry boat.'  
Then Gladys turned to look, and even so  
It was; a ferry boat, and far away  
Reared in the offing, lo, the purple peaks  
Of her loved island.

Then she raised her arms,  
And ran toward the boat, crying out, 'O rare,  
The island! fair befall the island; let  
Me reach the island.' And she sprang on board.

And after her stepped in the freakish maid  
And the fair mother, brooding o'er her child ;  
And this one took the helm, and that let go  
The sail, and off they flew, and furrowed up  
A flaky hill before, and left behind  
A sobbing snake-like tail of creamy foam ;  
And dancing hither, thither, sometimes shot  
Toward the island ; then, when Gladys looked,  
Were leaving it to leeward. And the maid  
Whistled a wind to come and rock the craft,  
And would be leaning down her head to mew  
At cat-fish, then lift out into her lap  
And dandle baby-seals, which, having kissed,  
She flung to their sleek mothers, till her own  
Rebuked her in good English ; after cried,  
'Luff, luff, we shall be swamped.' 'I will not luff,'  
Sobbed the fair mischief ; 'you are cross to me.'  
'For shame !' the mother shrieked ! 'luff, luff, my  
    dear ;  
Kiss and be friends, and thou shalt have the fish  
With the curly tail to ride on.' So she did,  
And presently a dolphin bouncing up,  
She sprang upon his slippery back—'Farewell,'  
She laughed, was off, and all the sea grew calm.

Then Gladys was much happier, and was 'ware  
In the smooth weather that this woman talked  
Like one in sleep, and murmured certain thoughts

Which seemed to be like echoes of her own.  
She nodded, ' Yes, the girl is going now  
To her own island. Gladys poor? Not she !  
Who thinks so? Once I met a man in white,  
Who said to me, " The thing that might have been  
Is called, and questioned why it hath not been ;  
And can it give good reason, it is set  
Beside the actual, and reckoned in  
To fill the empty gaps of life." Ah, so  
The possible stands by us ever fresh,  
Fairer than aught which any life hath owned,  
And makes divine amends. Now this was set  
Apart from kin, and not ordained a home ;  
An equal ;—and not suffered to fence in  
A little plot of earthly good, and say,  
' T is mine ;' but in bereavement of the part,  
O, yet to taste the whole,—to understand  
The grandeur of the story, not to feel  
Sate with good possessed, but evermore  
A healthful hunger for the great idea,  
The beauty and the blessedness of life.

' Lo, now, the shadow !' quoth she, breaking off,  
' We are in the shadow.' Then did Gladys turn,  
And, O, the mountain with the purple peaks  
Was close at hand. It cast a shadow out,  
And they were in it : and she saw the snow,  
And under that the rocks, and under that

The pines, and then the pasturage ; and saw  
Numerous dips, and undulations rare,  
Running down seaward, all astir with lithe  
Long canes, and lofty feathers ; for the palms  
And spice trees of the south, nay, every growth,  
Meets in that island.

So that woman ran  
The boat ashore, and Gladys set her foot  
Thereon. Then all at once much laughter rose ;  
Invisible folk set up exultant shouts,  
' It all belongs to Gladys ; ' and she ran  
And hid herself among the nearest trees  
And panted, shedding tears.

So she looked round,  
And saw that she was in a banyan grove,  
Full of wild peacocks,—pecking on the grass,  
A flickering mass of eyes, blue, green, and gold,  
Or reaching out their jewelled necks, where high  
They sat in rows along the boughs. No tree  
Cumbered with creepers let the sunshine through,  
But it was caught in scarlet cups, and poured  
From these on amber tufts of bloom, and dropped  
Lower on azure stars. The air was still,  
As if awaiting somewhat, or asleep,  
And Gladys was the only thing that moved,  
Excepting—no, they were not birds—what then ?  
Glorified rainbows with a living soul ?  
While they passed through a sunbeam they were seen,

Not elsewhere, but they were present yet  
In shade. They were at work, pomegranate fruit  
That lay about removing—purple grapes,  
That clustered in the path, clearing aside.  
Through a small spot of light would pass and go,  
The glorious happy mouth and two fair eyes  
Of somewhat that made rustlings where it went ;  
But when a beam would strike the ground sheer down,  
Behold them ! they had wings, and they would pass  
One after other with the sheeny fans,  
Bearing them slowly, that their hues were seen,  
Tender as russet crimson dropt on snows,  
Or where they turned flashing with gold and dashed  
With purple glooms. And they had feet, but these  
Did barely touch the ground. And they took heed  
Not to disturb the waiting quietness ;  
Nor rouse up fawns, that slept beside their dams ;  
Nor the fair leopard, with her sleek paws laid  
Across her little drowsy cubs ; nor swans,  
That, floating, slept upon a glassy pool ;  
Nor rosy cranes, all slumbering in the reeds,  
With heads beneath their wings. For this, you know,  
Was Eden. She was passing through the trees  
That made a ring about it, and she caught  
A glimpse of glades beyond. All she had seen  
Was nothing to them ; but words are not made  
To tell that tale. No wind was let to blow,  
And all the doves were bidden to hold their peace.



Why? One was working in a valley near,  
And none might look that way. It was understood  
That He had nearly ended that His work ;  
For two shapes met, and one to other spake,  
Accosting him with, ' Prince, what worketh He ?'  
Who whispered, ' Lo ! He fashioneth red clay.'  
And all at once a little trembling stir  
Was felt in the earth, and every creature woke,  
And laid its head down, listening. It was known  
Then that the work was done ; the new-made king  
Had risen, and set his feet upon his realm,  
And it acknowledged him.

But in her path  
Came some one that withstood her, and he said,  
' What doest thou here ?' Then she did turn and flee,  
Among those coloured spirits, through the grove,  
Trembling for haste ; it was not well with her  
Till she came forth of those thick banyan trees,  
And set her feet upon the common grass,  
And felt the common wind.

Yet once beyond,  
She could not choose but cast a backward glance.  
The lovely matted growth stood like a wall,  
And means of entering were not evident—  
The gap had closed. But Gladys laughed for joy ;  
She said, ' Remoteness and a multitude  
Of years are counted nothing here. Behold,  
To-day I have been in Eden. O, it blooms



In my own island.'

And she wandered on,  
Thinking, until she reached a place of palms,  
And all the earth was sandy where she walked—  
Sandy and dry—strewn with papyrus leaves,  
Old idols, rings and pottery, painted lids  
Of mummies (for perhaps it was the way  
That leads to dead old Egypt), and withal  
Excellent sunshine cut out sharp and clear  
The hot prone pillars, and the carven plinths—  
Stone lotus cups, with petals dipped in sand,  
And wicked gods, and sphinxes bland, who sat,  
And smiled upon the ruin. O how still !  
Hot, blank, illuminated with the clear  
Stare of an unveiled sky. The dry stiff leaves  
Of palm trees never rustled, and the soul  
Of that dead ancients was itself dead.  
She was above her ankles in the sand,  
When she beheld a rocky road, and, lo !  
It bare in it the ruts of chariot wheels,  
Which erst had carried to their pagan prayers  
The brown old Pharaohs ; for the ruts led on  
To a great cliff, that either was a cliff  
Or some dread shrine in ruins—partly reared  
In front of that same cliff, and partly hewn  
Or excavate within its heart. Great heaps  
Of sand and stones on either side there lay ;  
And, as the girl drew on, rose out from each,

As from a ghostly kennel, gods unblest,  
Dog-headed, and behind them wingèd things  
Like angels ; and this carven multitude  
Hedged in, to right and left, the rocky road.

At last, the cliff—and in the cliff a door  
Yawning : and she looked in, as down the throat  
Of some stupendous giant, and beheld  
No floor, but wide, worn, flights of steps, that led  
Into a dimness. When the eyes could bear  
That change to gloom, she saw flight after flight,  
Flight after flight, the worn long stair go down,  
Smooth with the feet of nations dead and gone.  
So she did enter ; also she went down  
Till it was dark, and yet again went down,  
Till, gazing upward at that yawning door,  
It seemed no larger, in its height remote,  
Than a pin's head. But while, irresolute,  
She doubted of the end, yet farther down  
A slender ray of lamplight fell aw  
Along the stair, as from a door ajar :  
To this again she felt her way, and stepped  
Adown the hollow stair, and reached the light ;  
But fear fell on her, fear ; and she forbore  
Entrance, and listened. Ay ! 't was even so—  
A sigh ; the breathing as of one who slept  
And was disturbed. So she drew back awhile,  
And trembled ; then her doubting hand she laid  
Against the door, and pushed it ; but the light

Waned, faded, sank ; and as she came within—  
Hark, hark ! A spirit was it, and asleep ?  
A spirit doth not breathe like clay. There hung  
A cresset from the roof, and thence appeared  
A flickering speck of light, and disappeared ;  
Then dropped along the floor its elfish flakes,  
That fell on some one resting, in the gloom—  
Somewhat, a spectral shadow, then a shape  
That loomed. It was a heifer, ay, and white,  
Breathing and languid through prolonged repose.

Was it a heifer ? all the marble floor  
Was milk-white also, and the cresset paled,  
And straight their whiteness grew confused and mixed.

But when the cresset, taking heart, bloomed out—  
The whiteness—and asleep again ! but now  
It was a woman, robed, and with a face  
Lovely and dim. And Gladys while she gazed  
Murmured, ‘ O terrible ! I am afraid  
To breathe among these intermittent lives,  
That fluctuate in mystic solitude,  
And change and fade. Lo ! where the goddess sits  
Dreaming on her dim throne ; a crescent moon  
She wears upon her forehead. Ah ! her frown  
Is mournful, and her slumber is not sweet.  
What dost thou hold, Isis, to thy cold breast ?  
A baby god with finger on his lips,

Asleep, and dreaming of departed sway ?  
 Thy son. Hush, hush ; he knoweth all the lore  
 And sorcery of old Egypt ; but his mouth  
 He shuts ; the secret shall be lost with him,  
 He will not tell.'

The woman coming down !  
 ' Child, what art doing here ? ' the woman said ;  
 ' What wilt thou of Dame Isis and her bairn ?  
 (*Ay, ay, we see thee breathing in thy shroud—  
 Thy pretty shroud, all frilled and furbelowed.*)  
 The air is dim with dust of spicèd bones.  
 I mark a crypt down there. Tier upon tier  
 Of painted coffers fills it. What if we,  
 Passing, should slip, and crash into their midst—  
 Break the frail ancients, and smothered lie,  
 Tumbled among the ribs of queens and kings,  
 And all the gear they took to bed with them !  
 Horrible ! let us hence.

And Gladys said,  
 ' O, they are rough to mount, those stairs ; ' but she  
 Took her and laughed, and up the mighty flight  
 Shot like a meteor with her. ' There, ' said she ;  
 ' The light is sweet when one has smelled of graves,  
 Down in unholy heathen gloom ; farewell.'  
 She pointed to a gateway, strong and high,  
 Reared of hewn stones ; but, look ! in lieu of gate,  
 There was a glittering cobweb drawn across,  
 And on the lintel there were writ these words :

‘Ho, every one that cometh, I divide  
What hath been from what might be, and the line  
Hangeth before thee as a spider’s web ;  
Yet, wouldst thou enter thou must break the line,  
Or else forbear the hill.’

The maiden said,  
‘So, cobweb, I will break thee.’ And she passed  
Among some oak trees on the farther side,  
And waded through the bracken round their bolls,  
Until she saw the open, and drew on  
Toward the edge o’ the wood, where it was mixed  
With pines and heathery places wild and fresh.  
Here she put up a creature, that ran on  
Before her, crying, ‘Tint, tint, tint,’ and turned,  
Sat up, and stared at her with elfish eyes,  
Jabbering of gramarye, one Michael Scott.  
The wizard that wonned somewhere underground,  
With other talk enough to make one fear  
To walk in lonely places. After passed  
A man-at-arms, William of Deloraine ;  
He shook his head, ‘An’ if I list to tell,’  
Quoth he, ‘I know, but how it matters not ;’  
Then crossed himself, and muttered of a clap  
Of thunder, and a shape in amice grey,  
But still it mouthed at him, and whimpered, ‘Tint,  
Tint, tint.’ ‘There shall be wild work some day soon,’  
Quoth he, ‘thou limb of darkness : he will come,  
Thy master, push a hand up, catch thee, imp,

And so good Christians shall have peace, perdie.'

Then Gladys was so frightened, that she ran,  
And got away, towards a grassy down,  
Where sheep and lambs were feeding, with a boy  
To tend them. 'T was the boy who wears that herb  
Called heartsease in his bosom, and he sang  
So sweetly to his flock, that she stole on  
Nearer to listen. 'O, Content, Content,  
Give me,' sang he, 'thy tender company.  
I feed my flock among the myrtles ; all  
My lambs are twins, and they have laid them down  
Along the slopes of Beulah. Come, fair love,  
From the other side the river, where their harps  
Thou hast been helping them to tune. O come,  
And pitch thy tent by mine ; let me behold  
Thy mouth—that even in slumber talks of peace—  
Thy well-set locks, and dove-like countenance.'

And Gladys hearkened, couched upon the grass,  
Till she had rested ; then did ask the boy,  
For it was afternoon, and she was fain  
To reach the shore, 'Which is the path, I pray,  
That leads one to the water?' But he said,  
'Dear lass, I only know the narrow way,  
The path that leads one to the golden gate  
Across the river.' So she wandered on ;  
And presently her feet grew cool, the grass

Standing so high, and thyme being thick and soft.  
The air was full of voices, and the scent  
Of mountain blossom loaded all its wafts ;  
For she was on the slopes of a goodly mount,  
And reared in such a sort that it looked down  
Into the deepest valleys, darkest glades,  
And richest plains o' the island. It was set  
Midway between the snows majestic  
And a wide level, such as men would choose  
For growing wheat ; and some one said to her,  
' It is the hill Parnassus.' So she walked  
Yet on its lower slope, and she could hear  
The calling of an unseen multitude  
To some upon the mountain, ' Give us more ;'  
And others said, ' We are tired of this old world :  
Make it look new again.' Then there were some  
Who answered lovingly—(the dead yet speak  
From that high mountain, as the living do) ;  
But others sang desponding, ' We have kept  
The vision for a chosen few : we love  
Fit audience better than a rough huzza  
From the unreasoning crowd.'

Then words came up

' There was a time, you poets, was a time  
When all the poetry was ours, and made  
By some who climbed the mountain from our midst.  
We loved it then, we sang it in our streets.  
O, it grows obsolete ! Be you as they :



Our heroes die and drop away from us ;  
 Oblivion folds them 'neath her dusky wing,  
 Fair copies wasted to the hungering world.  
 Save them. We fall so low for lack of them,  
 That many of us think scorn of honest trade,  
 And take no pride in our own shops ; who care  
 Only to quit a calling, will not make  
 The calling what it might be : who despise  
 Their work, fate laughs at, and doth let the work  
 Dull, and degrade them.'

Then did Gladys smile :

'Heroes !' quoth she ; 'yet, now I think on it,  
 There was the jolly goldsmith, brave Sir Hugh,  
 Certes, a hero ready made. Methinks  
 I see him burnishing of golden gear,  
 Tankard and charger, and a-muttering low,  
 "London is thirsty"—(then he weighs a chain):  
 "'T is an ill thing, my masters. I would give  
 The worth of this, and many such as this,  
 To bring it water.'

Ay, and after him

There came up Guy of London, lettered son  
 O' the honest lighterman. I'll think on him,  
 Leaning upon the bridge on summer eves,  
 After his shop was closed: a still, grave man,  
 With melancholy eyes. "While these are hale,"  
 He saith, when he looks down and marks the crowd  
 Cheerily working ; where the river marge

Is blocked with ships and boats ; and all the wharves  
 Swarm, and the cranes swing in with merchandise—  
 “ While these are hale, ’t is well, ’t is very well.  
 But, O good Lord,” saith he, “ when these are sick—  
 I fear me, Lord, this excellent workmanship  
 Of Thine is counted for a cumbrance then.  
 Ay, ay, my hearties ! many a man of you,  
 Struck down, or maimed, or fevered, shrinks away,  
 And, mastered in that fight for lack of aid ;  
 Creeps shivering to a corner, and there dies.”  
 Well, we have heard the rest.

Ah, next I think

Upon the merchant captain, stout of heart  
 To dare and to endure. “ Robert,” saith he,  
 (The navigator Knox to his manful son,)  
 “ I sit a captive from the ship detained ;  
 This heathenry doth let thee visit her.  
 Remember, son, if thou, alas ! shouldst fail  
 To ransom thy poor father, they are free  
 As yet, the mariners ; have wives at home,  
 As I have ; ay, and liberty is sweet  
 To all men. For the ship, she is not ours,  
 Therefore, ’beseech thee, son, lay on the mate  
 This my command, to leave me, and set sail.  
 As for thyself——” “ Good father,” saith the son,  
 “ I will not, father, ask your blessing now,  
 Because, for fair, or else for evil, fate  
 We two shall meet again.” And so they did.

The dusky men, peeling off cinnamon,  
And beating nutmeg clusters from the tree,  
Ransom and bribe contemned. The good ship  
sailed,—

The son returned to share his father's cell.

'O, there are many such. Would I had wit  
Their worth to sing!' With that, she turned her feet.

'I am tired now,' said Gladys, 'of their talk  
Around this hill Parnassus.' And, behold,  
A piteous sight—an old, blind, greybeard king  
Led by a fool with bells. Now this was loved  
Of the crowd below the hill; and when he called  
For his lost kingdom, and bewailed his age,  
And plained on his unkind daughters, they were  
known

To say, that if the best of gold and gear  
Could have bought him back his kingdom, and made  
kind

The hard hearts which had broken his erewhile,  
They would have gladly paid it from their store  
Many times over. What is done is done,  
No help. The ruined majesty passed on.  
And look you! one who met her as she walked  
Showed her a mountain nymph lovely as light.  
Her name CEnone; and she mourned and mourned  
'O Mother Ida,' and she could not cease,  
No, nor be comforted.

And after this,  
Soon there came by, arrayed in Norman cap  
And kirtle, an Arcadian villager,  
Who said, 'I pray you, have you chanced to meet  
One Gabriel?' and she sighed ; but Gladys took  
And kissed her hand : she could not answer her,  
Because she guessed the end.

With that it drew  
To evening ; and as Gladys wandered on  
In the calm weather, she beheld the wave,  
And she ran down to set her feet again  
On the sea margin, which was covered thick  
With white shell-skeletons. The sky was red  
As wine. The water played among bare ribs  
Of many wrecks, that lay half-buried there  
In the sand. She saw a cave, and moved thereto  
To ask her way, and one so innocent  
Came out to meet her, that with marvelling mute  
She gazed and gazed into her sea-blue eyes,  
For in them beamed the untaught ecstasy  
Of childhood, that lives on though youth be come,  
And love just born.

She could not choose but name her shipwrecked  
prince,  
All blushing. She told Gladys many things  
That are not in the story—things, in sooth,  
That Prospero her father knew. But now

'T was evening, and the sun dropped ; purple stripes  
 In the sea were copied from some clouds that lay  
 Out in the west. And lo ! the boat, and more,  
 The freakish thing to take fair Gladys home.  
 She mowed at her, but Gladys took the helm :  
 ' Peace, peace ! ' she said ; ' be good : you shall not  
 steer,  
 For I am your liege lady.' Then she sang  
 The sweetest songs she knew all the way home.

So Gladys set her feet upon the sand ;  
 While in the sunset glory died away  
 The peaks of that blest island  
' Fare you well,
 My country, my own kingdom,' then she said,  
 ' Till I go visit you again, farewell.'

She looked toward their house with whom she dwelt,  
 The carriages were coming. Hastening up,  
 She was in time to meet them at the door,  
 And lead the sleepy little ones within ;  
 And some were cross and shivered, and her dames  
 Were weary and right hard to please ; but she  
 Felt like a beggar suddenly endowed  
 With a warm cloak to 'fend her from the cold.  
 ' For, come what will,' she said, ' I had *to-day*.  
 There is an island.'

*The Moral.*

What is the moral? Let us think awhile,  
Taking the editorial WE to help,  
It sounds respectable.

The moral ; yes,  
We always read, when any fable ends,  
'Hence we may learn.' A moral must be found.  
What do you think of this : 'Hence we may learn  
That dolphins swim about the coast of Wales,  
And Admiralty maps should now be drawn  
By teacher-girls, because their sight is keen,  
And they can spy out islands.' Will that do?  
No, that is far too plain—too evident.

Perhaps a general moralising vein—  
(We know we have a happy knack that way.  
We have observed, moreover, that young men  
Are fond of good advice, and so are girls ;  
Especially of that meandering kind,  
Which winding on so sweetly, treats of all  
They ought to be and do and think and wear,  
As one may say, from creeds to comforters.  
Indeed, we much prefer that sort ourselves,  
So soothing). Good, a moralising vein :  
That is the thing ; but how to manage it?  
'Hence we may learn,' if we be so inclined,  
That life goes best with those who take it best ;

That wit can spin from work a golden robe  
To queen it in ; that who can paint at will  
A private picture gallery, should not cry  
For shillings that will let him in to look  
At some by others painted. Furthermore,  
Hence we may learn, you poets—(*and we count  
For poets all who ever felt that such  
They were, and all who secretly have known  
That such they could be ; ay, moreover, all  
Who wind the robes of idealty  
About the bareness of their lives, and hang  
Comforting curtains, knit of fancy's yarn,  
Nightly betwixt them and the frosty world*)—  
Hence we may learn, you poets, that of all  
We should be most content. The earth is given  
To us : we reign by virtue of a sense  
Which lets us hear the rhythm of that old verse,  
The ring of that old tune whereto she spins.  
Humanity is given to us : we reign  
By virtue of a sense, which lets us in  
To know its troubles ere they have been told,  
And take them home and lull them into rest  
With mournfullest music. Time is given to us—  
Time past, time future. Who, good sooth, beside  
Have seen it well, have walked this empty world  
When she went steaming, and from pulpy hills  
Have marked the spurting of their flamy crowns?



Have not we seen the tabernacle pitched,  
And peered between the linen curtains, blue,  
Purple, and scarlet, at the dimness there,  
And, frightened, have not dared to look again?  
But, quaint antiquity! beheld, we thought,  
A chest that might have held the manna pot  
And Aaron's rod that budded. Ay, we leaned  
Over the edge of Britain, while the fleet  
Of Cæsar loomed and neared; then, afterwards,  
We saw fair Venice looking at herself  
In the glass below her, while her Doge went forth  
In all his bravery to the wedding.

This,

However, counts for nothing to the grace  
We wot of in time future:—therefore add,  
And afterwards have done: '*Hence we may learn,*'  
That though it be a grand and comely thing  
To be unhappy—(and we think it is,  
Because so many grand and clever folk  
Have found out reasons for unhappiness,  
And talked about uncomfortable things—  
Low motives, bores, and shams, and hollowness,  
The hollowness o' the world, till we at last  
Have scarcely dared to jump or stamp, for fear,  
Being so hollow, it should break some day,  
And let us in)—yet, since we are not grand,  
O, not at all, and as for cleverness,  
That may be or may not be—it is well

For us to be as happy as we can !

Agreed : and with a word to the noble sex,  
As thus : we pray you carry not your guns  
On the full-cock ; we pray you set your pride  
In its proper place, and never be ashamed  
Of any honest calling—let us add,  
And end ; for all the rest, hold up your heads  
And mind your English.





*SONGS WITH PRELUDES.*

WEDLOCK.

**T**HE sun was streaming in : I woke, and said,  
‘ Where is my wife—that has been made my  
wife  
Only this year?’ The casement stood ajar :  
I did but lift my head : The pear-tree dropped,  
The great white pear-tree dropped with dew from  
leaves  
And blossom, under heavens of happy blue.

My wife had wakened first, and had gone down  
Into the orchard. All the air was calm ;  
Audible humming filled it. At the roots  
Of peony bushes lay in rose-red heaps,  
Or snowy, fallen bloom. The crag-like hills  
Were tossing down their silver messengers,  
And two brown foreigners, called cuckoo-birds,  
Gave them good answer ! all things else were mute ;  
An idle world lay listening to their talk,

They had it to themselves.

What ails my wife?

I know not if aught ails her ; though her step  
 Tell of a conscious quiet, lest I wake.  
 She moves atween the almond boughs, and bends  
 One thick with bloom to look on it. ' O love !  
 A little while thou hast withdrawn thyself,  
 At unaware to think thy thoughts alone :  
 How sweet, and yet pathetic to my heart  
 The reason. Ah ! thou art no more thine own.  
 Mine, mine, O love ! Tears gather 'neath my lids,—  
 Sorrowful tears for thy lost liberty,  
 Because it was so sweet. Thy liberty,  
 That yet, O love, thou wouldst not have again.  
 No ; all is right. But who can give, or bless,  
 Or take a blessing, but there comes withal  
 Some pain ?'

She walks beside the lily bed,  
 And holds apart her gown ; she would not hurt  
 The leaf-enfolded buds, that have not looked  
 Yet on the daylight. O, thy locks are brown,—  
 Fairest of colours !—and a darker brown  
 The beautiful, dear, veiled, modest eyes.  
 A bloom as of blush roses covers her  
 Forehead, and throat, and cheek. Health breathes  
 with her,  
 And graceful vigour. Fair and wondrous soul !  
 To think that thou art mine !

My wife came in,  
And moved into the chamber. As for me,  
I heard, but lay as one that nothing hears,  
And feigned to be asleep.

## I

The racing river leaped, and sang  
Full blithely in the perfect weather,  
All round the mountain echoes rang,  
For blue and green were glad together.

## II

This rained out light from every part,  
And that with songs of joy was thrilling ;  
But, in the hollow of my heart,  
There ached a place that wanted filling.

## III

Before the road and river meet,  
And stepping-stones are wet and glisten,  
I heard a sound of laughter sweet,  
And paused to like it, and to listen.

## IV

I heard the chanting waters flow,  
The cushat's note, the bee's low humming,—  
Then turned the hedge, and did not know—  
How could I?—that my time was coming.

## V

A girl upon the nighest stone,  
Half doubtful of the deed, was standing,  
So far the shallow flood had flown  
Beyond the 'customed leap of landing.

## VI

She knew not any need of me,  
Yet me she waited all unweeting ;  
We thought not I had crossed the sea,  
And half the sphere to give her meeting.

## VII

I waded out, her eyes I met,  
I wished the moments had been hours ;  
I took her in my arms, and set  
Her dainty feet among the flowers.

## VIII

Her fellow maids in copse and lane,  
Ah ! still, methinks, I hear them calling ;  
The wind's soft whisper in the plain,  
The cushat's coo, the water's falling.

## IX

But now it is a year ago,  
But now possession crowns endeavour ;  
I took her in my heart, to grow  
And fill the hollow place for ever.

## REGRET.

O THAT word REGRET !  
There have been nights and morns when we have  
sighed,  
'Let us alone, Regret ! We are content  
To throw thee all our past, so thou wilt sleep  
For aye.' But it is patient, and it wakes ;  
It hath not learned to cry itself to sleep,  
But plaineth on the bed that it is hard.

We did amiss when we did wish it gone  
And over : sorrows humanise our race ;  
Tears are the showers that fertilise this world ;  
And memory of things precious keepeth warm  
The heart that once did hold them.

They are poor  
That have lost nothing ; they are poorer far  
Who, losing, have forgotten ; they most poor  
Of all, who lose and wish they MIGHT forget.  
For life is one, and in its warp and woof  
'There runs a thread of gold that glitters fair,  
And sometimes in the pattern shows most sweet  
Where there are sombre colours. It is true  
That we have wept. But oh ! this thread of gold,



We would not have it tarnish ; let us turn  
Oft and look back upon the wondrous web,  
And when it shineth sometimes we shall know  
That memory is possession.

## I

When I remember something which I had,  
    But which is gone, and I must do without,  
I sometimes wonder how I can be glad,  
    Even in cowslip time when hedges sprout ;  
It makes me sigh to think on it,—but yet  
My days will not be better days, should I forget.

## II

When I remember something promised me,  
    But which I never had, nor can have now,  
Because the promiser we no more see  
    In countries that accord with mortal vow ;  
When I remember this, I mourn,—but yet  
My happier days are not the days when I forget.

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## LAMENTATION.

I READ upon that book,  
Which down the golden gulf doth let us look  
On the sweet days of pastoral majesty ;  
I read upon that book  
How, when the Shepherd Prince did flee  
(Red Esau's twin), he desolate took  
The stone for a pillow : then he fell on sleep.  
And lo ! there was a ladder. Lo ! there hung  
A ladder from the star-place, and it clung  
To the earth : it tied her so to heaven ; and oh !  
There fluttered wings ;  
Then were ascending and descending things  
That stepped to him where he lay low ;  
Then up the ladder would a-drifting go  
(This feathered brood of heaven), and show  
Small as white flakes in winter that are blown  
Together, underneath the great white throne.

When I had shut the book, I said,  
' Now, as for me, my dreams upon my bed  
Are not like Jacob's dream ;  
Yet I have got it in my life ; yes, I,

And many more : it doth not us beseem,

Therefore, to sigh.

Is there not hung a ladder in our sky ?

Yea ; and, moreover, all the way up on high

Is thickly peopled with the prayers of men.

We have no dream ! What then ?

Like wingèd wayfarers the height they scale,

(By Him that offers them they shall prevail) —

The prayers of men.

But where is found a prayer for me ;

How should I pray ?

My heart is sick, and full of strife.

I heard one whisper with departing breath,

“Suffer us not, for any pains of death,

To fall from Thee.”

But O, the pains of life ! the pains of life !

There is no comfort now, and nought to  
win,

But yet—I will begin.’

I

‘Preserve to me my wealth,’ I do not say,

For that is wasted away ;

And much of it was cankered ere it went.

‘Preserve to me my health,’ I cannot say,

For that, upon a day,

Went after other delights to banishment.

## II

What can I pray? 'Give me forgetfulness?'  
No, I would still possess  
Past away smiles, though present fronts be stern.  
'Give me again my kindred?' Nay; not so,  
Not idle prayers. We know  
They that have crossed the river cannot return.

## III

I do not pray, 'Comfort me! comfort me!'  
For how should comfort be?  
O,—O that cooing mouth—that little white head!  
No; but I pray, 'If it be not too late,  
Open to me the gate,  
That I may find my babe when I am dead.

## IV

'Show me the path. I had forgotten Thee  
When I was happy and free,  
Walking down here in the gladsome light o' the sun;  
But now I come and mourn; O set my feet  
In the road to Thy blest seat,  
And for the rest, O God, Thy will be done.'

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## DOMINION.

WHEN found the rose delight in her fair hue ?  
Colour is nothing to this world ; 't is I  
That see it. Farther, I have found, my soul,  
That trees are nothing to their fellow trees ;  
It is but I that love their stateliness,  
And I that, comforting my heart, do sit  
At noon beneath their shadow. I will step  
On the ledges of this world, for it is mine ;  
But the other world ye wot of, shall go too ;  
I will carry it in my bosom. O my world,  
That was not built with clay !

Consider it  
(This outer world we tread on) as a harp—  
A gracious instrument on whose fair strings  
We learn those airs we shall be set to play  
When mortal hours are ended. Let the wings,  
Man, of thy spirit move on it as wind,  
And draw forth melody. Why shouldst thou yet  
Lie grovelling? More is won than e'er was lost :  
Inherit. Let thy day be to thy night  
A teller of good tidings. Let thy praise  
Go up as birds go up that, when they wake,  
Shake off the dew and soar.

So take joy home,  
And make a place in thy great heart for her,  
And give her time to grow, and cherish her ;  
Then will she come, and oft will sing to thee,  
When thou art working in the furrows ; ay,  
Or weeding in the sacred hour of dawn.  
It is a comely fashion to be glad—  
Joy is the grace we say to God.

Art tired ?

There is a rest remaining. Hast thou sinned ?  
There is a Sacrifice. Lift up thy head,  
The lovely world, and the over-world alike,  
Ring with a song eterne, a happy rede,  
'THY FATHER LOVES THEE.'

## I

Yon moorèd mackerel fleet  
Hangs thick as a swarm of bees,  
Or a clustering village street  
Foundationless built on the seas.

## II

The mariners ply their craft,  
Each set in his castle frail ;  
His care is all for the draught,  
And he dries the rain-beaten sail.

## III

For rain came down in the night,  
And thunder muttered full oft,  
But now the azure is bright,  
And hawks are wheeling aloft.

## IV

I take the land to my breast,  
In her coat with daisies fine ;  
For me are the hills in their best,  
And all that's made is mine.

## V

Sing high ! ' Though the red sun dip,  
There yet is a day for me ;  
Nor youth I count for a ship  
That long ago foundered at sea.

## VI

Did the lost love die and depart ?  
Many times since we have met ;  
For I hold the years in my heart,  
And all that was—is yet.

## VII

' I grant to the king his reign ;  
Let us yield him homage due ;  
But over the lands there are twain,  
O king, I must rule as you.



## VIII

' I grant to the wise his meed,  
But his yoke I will not brook,  
For God taught ME to read—  
He lent me the world for a book.'

## FRIENDSHIP.

ON A SUN-PORTRAIT OF HER HUSBAND, SENT BY A  
WIFE TO THEIR FRIEND.

BEAUTIFUL eyes—and shall I see no more  
The living thought when it would leap from them,  
And play in all its sweetness 'neath their lids?

Here was a man familiar with fair heights  
That poets climb. Upon his peace the tears  
And troubles of our race deep inroads made,  
Yet life was sweet to him ; he kept his heart  
At home. Who saw his wife might well have thought—  
' God loves this man. He chose a wife for him—  
The true one ! ' O sweet eyes, that seem to live,  
I know so much of you, tell me the rest !

Eyes full of fatherhood and tender care  
For small, young children. Is a message here  
That you would fain have sent, but had not time?  
If such there be, I promise, by long love  
And perfect friendship, by all trust that comes  
Of understanding, that I will not fail,  
No, nor delay to find it.

O, my heart  
Will often pain me as for some strange fault—  
Some grave defect in nature—when I think  
How I, delighted, 'neath those olive trees,  
Moved to the music of the tideless main,  
While, with sore weeping, in an island home  
They laid that much-loved head beneath the sod,  
And I did not know.

## I

I stand on the bridge where last we stood  
When young leaves played at their best.  
The children called us from yonder wood,  
And rock-doves crooned on the nest.

## II

Ah, yet you call—in your gladness call—  
And I hear your pattering feet ;  
It does not matter, matter at all,  
You fatherless children sweet—

## III

It does not matter at all to you,  
Young hearts that pleasure besets ;  
The father sleeps, but the world is new,  
The child of his love forgets.

## IV

I too, it may be, before they drop,  
The leaves that flicker to-day,  
Ere bountiful gleams make ripe the crop,  
Shall pass from my place away :

## V

Ere yon grey cygnet puts on her white,  
Or snow lies soft on the wold,  
Shall shut these eyes on the lovely light,  
And leave the story untold.

## VI

Shall I tell it there? Ah, let that be,  
For the warm pulse beats so high ;  
To love to-day, and to breathe and see—  
To-morrow perhaps to die—

## VII

Leave it with God. But this I have known,  
That sorrow is over soon ;  
Some in dark nights, sore weeping alone,  
Forget by full of the moon.

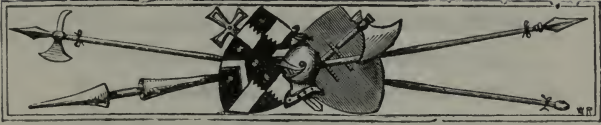
## VIII

But if all loved, as the few can love,  
This world would seldom be well ;  
And who need wish, if he dwells above,  
For a deep, a long death knell ?

## IX

There are four or five, who passing this place,  
While they live will name me yet ;  
And when I am gone will think on my face.  
And feel a kind of regret.





WINSTANLEY.

*The Apology.*



*UOTH the cedar to the reeds and rushes,  
' Water-grass, you know not what I do ;  
Know not of my storms, nor of my hushes,  
And—I know not you.'*

*Quoth the reeds and rushes, ' Wind ! O waken !  
Breathe, O wind, and set our answer free,  
For we have no voice, of you forsaken,  
For the cedar tree.'*

*Quoth the earth at midnight to the ocean,  
' Wilderness of water, lost to view,  
Nought you are to me but sounds of motion ;  
I am nought to you.'*

*Quoth the ocean, ' Dawn ! O fairest, clearest,  
Touch me with thy golden fingers bland ;  
For I have no smile till thou appearest  
For the lovely land.'*

*Quoth the hero dying, whelmed in glory,  
 'Many blame me, few have understood ;  
 Ah, my folk, to you I leave a story—  
 Make its meaning good.'*

*Quoth the folk, 'Sing, poet ! teach us, prove us ;  
 Surely we shall learn the meaning then ;  
 Wound us with a pain divine, O move us,  
 For this man of men.'*

WINSTANLEY'S deed, you kindly folk,  
 With it I fill my lay,  
 And a nobler man ne'er walked the world,  
 Let his name be what it may.

The good ship 'Snowdrop' tarried long,  
 Up at the vane looked he ;  
 'Belike,' he said, for the wind had dropped,  
 'She lieth becalmed at sea.'

The lovely ladies flocked within,  
 And still would each one say,  
 'Good mercer, be the ships come up ?'  
 But still he answered 'Nay.'

Then stepped two mariners down the street,

With looks of grief and fear :

‘ Now, if Winstanley be your name,

We bring you evil chæer.

‘ For the good ship “ Snowdrop ” struck—she struck

On the rock—the Eddystone,

And down she went with threescore men,

We two being left alone.

‘ Down in the deep, with freight and crew,

Past any help she lies,

And never a bale has come to shore

Of all thy merchandise.’

‘ For cloth o’ gold and comely frieze,’

Winstanley said, and sighed,

‘ For velvet coif, or costly coat,

They fathoms deep may bide.

‘ O thou brave skipper, blithe and kind,

O mariners bold and true,

Sorry at heart, right sorry am I,

A-thinking of yours and you.

‘ Many long days Winstanley’s breast

Shall feel a weight within,

For a waft of wind he shall be ’feard

And trading count but sin.



' To him no more it shall be joy  
To pace the cheerful town,  
And see the lovely ladies gay  
Step on in velvet gown.'

The ' Snowdrop ' sank at Lammas tide,  
All under the yeasty spray ;  
On Christmas Eve the brig ' Content '  
Was also cast away.

He little thought o' New Year's night,  
So jolly as he sat then,  
While drank the toast and praised the roast  
The round-faced Aldermen,—

While serving lads ran to and fro,  
Pouring the ruby wine,  
And jellies trembled on the board,  
And towering pasties fine,—

While loud huzzas ran up the roof  
Till the lamps did rock o'erhead,  
And holly boughs from rafters hung  
Dropped down their berries red,—

He little thought on Plymouth Hoe,  
With every rising tide,  
How the wave washed in his sailor lads,  
And laid them side by side.

There stepped a stranger to the board :  
‘ Now, stranger, who be ye ? ’  
He looked to right, he looked to left,  
And ‘ Rest you merry, ’ quoth he ;

‘ For you did not see the brig go down,  
Or ever a storm had blown ;  
For you did not see the white wave rear  
At the rock—the Eddystone.

‘ She drave at the rock with sternsails set ;  
Crash went the masts in twain ;  
She staggered back with her mortal blow,  
Then leaped at it again.

‘ There rose a great cry, bitter and strong,  
The misty moon looked out !  
And the water swarmed with seamen’s heads,  
And the wreck was strewed about.

‘ I saw her mainsail lash the sea  
As I clung to the rock alone ;  
Then she heeled over, and down she went,  
And sank like any stone.

‘ She was a fair ship, but all ’s one !  
For nought could bide the shock.’  
‘ I will take horse,’ Winstanley said,  
‘ And see this deadly rock.’

‘ For never again shall barque o’ mine  
Sail over the windy sea,  
Unless, by the blessing of God, for this  
Be found a remedy.’

Winstanley rode to Plymouth town  
All in the sleet and the snow,  
And he looked around on shore and sound  
As he stood on Plymouth Hoe.

Till a pillar of spray rose far away,  
And shot up its stately head,  
Reared and fell over, and reared again :  
‘ ’T is the rock ! the rock ! ’ he said.

Straight to the Mayor he took his way :  
‘ Good Master Mayor,’ quoth he,  
‘ I am a mercer of London town,  
And owner of vessels three,—

‘ But for your rock of dark renown,  
I had five to track the main.’  
‘ You are one of many,’ the old Mayor said,  
‘ That on the rock complain.

‘ An ill rock, mercer ! your words ring right,  
Well with my thoughts they chime,  
For my two sons to the world to come  
It sent before their time.’

‘Lend me a lighter, good Master Mayor,  
And a score of shipwrights free,  
For I think to raise a lantern tower  
On this rock o’ destiny.’

The old Mayor laughed, but sighed alsò ;  
‘Ah, youth,’ quoth he, ‘is rash ;  
Sooner, young man, thou ’lt root it out  
From the sea that doth it lash.

‘Who sails too near its jagged teeth,  
He shall have evil lot ;  
For the calmest seas that tumble there  
Froth like a boiling pot.

‘And the heavier seas few look on nigh,  
But straight they lay him dead ;  
A seventy-gun ship, sir !—they ’ll shoot  
Higher than her mast-head.

‘O, beacons sighted in the dark,  
They are right welcome things,  
And pitchpots flaming on the shore  
Show fair as angel wings.

‘Hast gold in hand? then light the land,  
It ’longs to thee and me ;  
But let alone the deadly rock  
In God Almighty’s sea.’

Yet said he, 'Nay—I must away,  
On the rock to set my feet ;  
My debts are paid, my will I made,  
Or ever I did thee greet.

'If I must die, then let me die  
By the rock and not elsewhere ;  
If I may live, O let me live  
To mount my lighthouse stair.'

The old Mayor looked him in the face,  
And answered : 'Have thy way ;  
Thy heart is stout, as if round about  
It was braced with an iron stay :

'Have thy will, mercer ! choose thy men,  
Put off from the storm-rid shore ;  
God with thee be, or I shall see  
Thy face and theirs no more.'

Heavily plunged the breaking wave,  
And foam flew up the lea,  
Morning and even the drifted snow  
Fell into the dark grey sea.

Winstanley chose him men and gear ;  
He said, 'My time I waste,'  
For the seas ran seething up the shore,  
And the wrack drave on in haste.

But twenty days he waited and more,  
Pacing the strand alone,  
Or ever he set his manly foot  
On the rock—the Eddystone.

Then he and the sea began their strife,  
And worked with power and might :  
Whatever the man reared up by day  
The sea broke down by night.

He wrought at ebb with bar and beam,  
He sailed to shore at flow ;  
And at his side, by that same tide,  
Came bar and beam alsò.

‘ Give in, give in,’ the old Mayor cried,  
‘ Or thou wilt rue the day.’  
‘ Yonder he goes,’ the townfolk sighed,  
‘ But the rock will have its way.

‘ For all his looks that are so stout,  
And his speeches brave and fair,  
He may wait on the wind, wait on the wave,  
But he ’ll build no lighthouse there.’

In fine weather and foul weather  
The rock his arts did flout,  
Through the long days and the short days,  
Till all that year ran out.

With fine weather and foul weather  
Another year came in :  
'To take his wage,' the workmen said,  
'We almost count a sin.'

Now March was gone, came April in,  
And a sea-fog settled down,  
And forth sailed he on a glassy sea,  
He sail'd from Plymouth town.

With men and stores he put to sea,  
As he was wont to do ;  
They showed in the fog like ghosts full faint—  
A ghostly craft and crew.

And the sea-fog lay and waxed away,  
For a long eight days and more ;  
'God help our men !' quoth the women then ;  
'For they bide long from shore.'

They paced the Hoe in doubt and dread :  
'Where may our mariners be ?'  
But the brooding fog lay soft as down  
Over the quiet sea.

A Scottish schooner made the port,  
The thirteenth day at e'en :  
'As I am a man,' the captain cried,  
'A strange sight I have seen :



‘ And a strange sound heard, my masters ail,  
At sea, in the fog and the rain,  
Like shipwrights’ hammers tapping low,  
Then loud, then low again.

‘ And a stately house one instant showed,  
Through a rift, on the vessel’s lee ;  
What manner of creatures may be those  
That build upon the sea ?’

Then sighed the folk, ‘ The Lord be praised !’  
And they flocked to the shore amain ;  
All over the Hoe that livelong night,  
Many stood out in the rain.

It ceased, and the red sun reared his head,  
And the rolling fog did flee ;  
And, lo ! in the offing faint and far  
Winstanley’s house at sea !

In fair weather with mirth and cheer  
The stately tower uprose ;  
In foul weather, with hunger and cold,  
They were content to close ;

Till up the stair Winstanley went,  
To fire the wick afar ;  
And Plymouth in the silent night  
Look’d out, and saw her star.

Winstanley set his foot ashore :  
Said he, ' My work is done ;  
I hold it strong to last as long  
As aught beneath the sun.

' But if it fail, as fail it may,  
Borne down with ruin and rout,  
Another than I shall rear it high,  
And brace the girders stout.

' A better than I shall rear it high,  
For now the way is plain,  
And tho' I were dead,' Winstanley said,  
' The light would shine again.

' Yet were I fain still to remain,  
Watch in my tower to keep,  
And tend my light in the stormiest night  
That ever did move the deep ;

' And if it stood, why then 't were good,  
Amid their tremulous stirs,  
To count each stroke when the mad waves broke,  
For cheers of mariners.

' But if it fell, then this were well,  
That I should with it fall ;  
Since, for my part, I have built my heart  
In the courses of its wall.

‘ Ay ! I were fain, long to remain,  
    Watch in my tower to keep,  
And tend my light in the stormiest night  
    That ever did move the deep.’

With that Winstanley went his way,  
    And left the rock renowned,  
And summer and winter his pilot star  
    Hung bright o’er Plymouth Sound.

But it fell out, fell out at last,  
    That he would put to sea,  
To scan once more his lighthouse tower  
    On the rock o’ destiny.

And the winds woke, and the storm broke,  
    And wrecks came plunging in ;  
None in the town that night lay down  
    Or sleep or rest to win.

The great mad waves were rolling graves,  
    And each flung up its dead ;  
The seething flow was white below,  
    And black the sky o’erhead.

And when the dawn, the dull, grey dawn,  
    Broke on the trembling town,  
And men looked south to the harbour mouth,  
    The lighthouse tower was down.

Down in the deep where he doth sleep,  
Who made it shine afar,  
And then in the night that drowned its light,  
Set, with his pilot star.

---

*Many fair tombs in the glorious glooms  
At Westminster they show ;  
The brave and the great lie there in state :  
Winstanley lieth low.*





## ROSAMUND.

He blew with His winds, and they were scattered.



NE soweth and another reapeth.'

Ay,

Too true, too true. One soweth—unaware  
Cometh a reaper stealthily while he dreams

Bindeth the golden sheaf, and in his bosom  
As 't were between the dewfall and the dawn  
Bears it away. Who other was to blame?  
Is it I? Is it I?—No verily, not I,  
'T was a good action, and I smart therefore;  
Oblivion of a righteous enmity  
Wrought me this wrong. I pay with my self-ruth  
That I had ruth toward mine enemy;  
It needed not to slay mine enemy,  
Only to let him lie and succourless  
Drift to the foot o' the Everlasting Throne;  
Being mine enemy, he had not accused  
One of my nation there of unkind deeds  
Or ought the way of war forbids.

Let be !

I will not think upon it. Yet she was—  
O, she was dear ; my dutiful, dear child.  
One soweth—Nay, but I will tell this out,  
The first fyte was the best, I call it such  
For now as some old song men think on it.

I dwell where England narrows running north ;  
And while our hay was cut came rumours up  
Humming and swarming round our heads like bees :

‘ Drake from the bay of Cadiz hath come home,  
And they are forth, the Spaniards with a force  
Invincible.’

‘ The Prince of Parma, couched  
At Dunkirk, e’en by torchlight makes to toil  
His shipwright thousands—thousands in the ports  
Of Flanders and Brabant. An hundred hendes  
Transports to his great squadron adding, all  
For our confusion.’

‘ England’s great ally  
Henry of France, by insurrection fallen,  
Of him the said Prince Parma mocking cries,  
He shall not help the Queen of England now  
Not even with his tears, more needing them  
To weep his own misfortune.’

Was that all  
The truth ? Not half, and yet it was enough

(Albeit not half that half was well believed),  
 For all the land stirred in the half belief  
 As dreamers stir about to wake ; and now  
 Comes the Queen's message, all her lieges bid  
 To rise, ' lieftenants, and the better sort  
 Of gentlemen ' whereby the Queen's grace meant,  
 As it may seem the sort that willed to rise  
 And arm, and come to aid her.

Distance wrought

Safety for us, my neighbours and near friends,  
 The peril lay along our channel coast  
 And marked the city, undefended fair  
 Rich London. O to think of Spanish mail  
 Ringing—of riotous conquerors in her street,  
 Chasing and fighting (would there were no more  
 To think on) her fair wives and her fair maids.  
 —But hope is fain to deem them forth of her.

Then Spain to the sacking ; then they tear away  
 Arras and carvèd work. O then they break  
 And toss, and mar her quaint orfèverie  
 Priceless—then split the wine kegs, spill the mead,  
 Trail out the pride of ages in the dust ;  
 Turn over with pikes her silken merchandise,  
 Strip off the pictures of her kings, and spoil  
 Their palaces that nigh five hundred years  
 Have rued no alien footsteps on the floor,



And work—for the days of miracle are gone—  
All unimaginable waste and woe.

Some cried, 'But England hath the better cause ;  
We think not those good days indeed are done ;  
We look to Heaven for aid on England's side.'  
Then other, 'Nay, the harvest is above,  
God comforts there His own, and ill men leaves  
To run long scores up in this present world,  
And pay in another.

Look not here for aid.

Latimer, poor old saint, died in the street  
With nigh, men say, three hundred of his kind,  
All bid to look for worse death after death,  
Succourless, comfortless, unfriended, curst.  
Mary, and Gardiner, and the Pope's man Pole  
Died upon down, lulled in a silken shade,  
Soothed with assurance of a waiting heaven,  
And Peter peering through the golden gate,  
With his gold key in 's hand to let them in.'

'Nay, leave,' quoth I, 'the martyrs to their heaven,  
And all who live the better that they died.  
But look you now, a nation hath no heaven,  
A nation's life and work and wickedness  
And punishment—or otherwise, I say  
A nation's life and goodness and reward  
Are here. And in my nation's righteous cause

I look for aid, and cry, SO HELP ME GOD  
As I will help my righteous nation now  
With all the best I have, and know, and am,  
I trust Thou wilt not let her light be quenched ;  
I go to aid, and if I fall—I fall,  
And, God of nations, leave my soul to Thee.'

Many did say like words, and all would give  
Of gold, of weapons, and of horses that  
They had to hand or on the spur o' the time  
Could gather. My fair dame did sell her rings,  
So others. And they sent us well equipped  
Who minded to be in the coming fray  
Whether by land or sea ; my hope the last,  
For I of old therewith was conversant.

Then as we rode down southward all the land  
Was at her harvesting. The oats were cut  
Ere we were three days forth, and then the wheat,  
And the wide country spite of loathèd threat  
Was busy. There was news to hearten us :  
The Hollanders were coming roundly in  
With sixty ships of war, all fierce, and full  
Of spleen, for not alone our sake but theirs  
Willing to brave encounter where they might.

So after five days we did sight the Sound,  
And look on Plymouth harbour from the hill.

Then I full glad drew bridle, lighted straight,  
Ran down and mingled with a waiting crowd.

Many stood gazing on the level deep  
That scarce did tremble ; 't was in hue as sloes  
That hang till winter on a leafless bough,  
So black bulged down upon it a great cloud  
And probed it through and through with forkèd stabs  
Incessant, and rolled on it thunder bursts  
Till the dark water lowered as one afraid.

That was afar. The land and nearer sea  
Lay sweltering in hot sunshine. The brown beach  
Scarce whispered, for a soft incoming tide  
Was gentle with it. Green the water lapped  
And sparkled at all edges. The night-heavens  
Are not more thickly speckled o'er with stars  
Than that fair harbour with its fishing craft.  
And crowds of galleys shooting to and fro  
Did feed the ships of war with their stout crews,  
And bear aboard fresh water, furniture  
Of war, much lesser victual, sallets, fruit,  
All manner equipment for the squadron, sails,  
Long spars.

Also was chaffering on the Hoe,  
Buying and bargaining, taking of leave  
With tears and kisses, while on all hands pushed

Tall lusty men with baskets on their heads  
Piled of fresh bread, and biscuit newly drawn.

Then shouts, 'The captains !'

Raleigh, Hawkins, Drake,  
Old Martin Frobisher, and many more ;  
Howard, the Lord High Admiral, headed them—  
They coming leisurely from the bowling green,  
Elbowed their way. For in their stoutness loth  
To hurry when ill news first brake on them,  
They playing a match ashore—ill news I say,  
'The Spaniards are toward'—while panic-struck  
The people ran about them, Drake cries out,  
Knowing their fear should make the danger worse,  
'Spaniards, my masters ! Let the Spaniards wait.  
Fall not a-shouting for the boats ; is time  
To play the match out, ay to win, and then  
To beat the Spaniards.'

So the rest gave way  
At his insistance, playing that afternoon  
The bravest match (one saith) was ever scored.

'T was no time lost ; nay, not a moment lost ;  
For look you, when the winning cast was made,  
The town was calm, the anchors were all up,  
The boats were manned to row them each to his ship,  
The lowering cloud in the offing had gone south

Against the wind, and all was work, stir, heed,  
Nothing forgot, nor grudged, nor slurred, and most  
Men easy at heart as those brave sailors seemed.

And specially the women had put by  
On a sudden their deep dread ; yon Cornish coast  
Neared of his insolency by the foe,  
With his high sea-castles numerous, sea-forts  
Many, his galleys out of number, manned  
Each by three hundred slaves chained to the oar ;  
All his strong fleet of lesser ships, but great  
As any of ours—why that same Cornish coast  
Might have lain farther than the far west land,  
So had a few stout-hearted looks and words  
Wasted the meaning, chilled the menace of  
That frightful danger, imminent, hard at hand.

‘The captains come, the captains !’ and I turned  
As they drew on. I marked the urgency  
Flashing in each man’s eye : fain to be forth  
But willing to be held at leisure. Then  
Cried a fair woman of the better sort  
To Howard, passing by her pannier’d ass,  
‘ Apples, Lord Admiral, good captains all,  
Look you, red apples sharp and sweet are these.’

Quoth he a little chafed, ‘ Let be, let be,  
No time is this for bargaining, good dame.

Let be ;' and pushing past, ' Beshrew thy heart  
 (And mine that I should say it), bargain ! nay  
 I meant not bargaining,' she falters ; crying,  
 'I brought them my poor gift. Pray you now take,  
 Pray you.'

He stops, and with a childlike smile  
 That makes the dame amend, stoops down to choose,  
 While I step up that love not many words,  
 'What should he do,' quoth I, 'to help this need  
 That hath a bag of money, and good will?'  
 'Charter a ship,' he saith, nor e'er looks up,  
 'And put aboard her victual, tackle, shot,  
 Ought he can lay his hand on—look he give  
 Wide sea room to the Spanish hounds, make sail  
 For ships of ours, to ease of wounded men,  
 And succour with that freight he brings withal.

His foot, yet speaking, was aboard his boat,  
 His comrades, each red apples in the hand,  
 Come after, and with blessings manifold  
 Cheering, and cries, 'Good luck, good luck !' they speed.

'T was three years three months past.

O yet methinks

I hear that thunder crash i' the offing ; hear  
 Their words who when the crowd melted away  
 Gathered together. Comrades we of old,  
 About to adventure us at Howard's hest

On the unsafe sea. For he, a Catholic,  
 As is my wife, and therefore my one child,  
 Detested and defied th' most Catholic King  
 Philip. He, trusted of her grace—and cause  
 She had, the nation following suit—he deemed,  
 'T was whisper'd, ay and Raleigh, and Francis Drake  
 No less, the event of battle doubtfuller  
 Than English tongue might own ; the peril dread  
 As ought in this world ever can be deemed  
 That is not yet past praying for.

So far

So good. As birds awaked do stretch their wings  
 The ships did stretch forth sail, full clad they towered  
 And right into the sunset went, hull down  
 E'en with the sun.

To us in twilight left,  
 Glory being over, came despondent thought  
 'That mocked men's eager act From many a hill,  
 As if the land complained to Heaven, they sent  
 A towering shaft of murky incense high,  
 Livid with black despair in lieu of praise.  
 The green wood hissed at every beacon's edge  
 That widen'd fear. The smell of pitchpots fled  
 Far over the field, and tongues of fire leaped up,  
 Ay, till all England woke, and knew, and wailed.

But we i' the night through that detested reek  
 Rode eastward. Every mariner's voice was given



'Gainst any fear for the western shires. The cry  
Was all, ' They sail for Calais roads, and thence,  
The goal is London.'

Nought slept, man nor beast.  
Ravens and rooks flew forth, and with black wings,  
Affrighted, swept our eyes. Pale eddying moths  
Came by in crowds and whirled them on the flames.

We rode till pierced those beacon fires the shafts  
O' the sun, and their red smouldering ashes dulled.  
Beside them, scorched, smoke-blackened, weary, leaned  
Men that had fed them, dropped their tired arms  
And dozed.

And also through that day we rode,  
Till reapers at their nooning sat awhile  
On the shady side of corn-shocks: all the talk  
Of high, of low, or them that went or stayed  
Determined but unhopeful; desperate  
To strike a blow for England ere she fell.

And ever loomed the Spaniard to our thought,  
Still waxed the fame of that great Armament—  
New horsemen joining, swelled it more and more—  
Their bulky ships, galleons having five decks,  
Zabraes, pataches, galleys of Portugal,  
Caravels rowed with oars, their galliasses  
Vast, and complete with chapels, chambers, towers.

And in the said ships of free mariners  
 Eight thousand, and of slaves two thousand more,  
 An army twenty thousand strong. O then  
 Of culverin, of double culverin,  
 Ordnance and arms, all furniture of war,  
 Victual, and last their fierceness and great spleen,  
 Willing to founder, burn, split, wreck themselves,  
 But they would land, fight, overcome, and reign.

Then would we count up England. Set by theirs,  
 Her fleet as walnut shells. And a few pikes  
 Stored in the belfries, and a few brave men  
 For wielding them. But as the morning wore,  
 And we went ever eastward, ever on,  
 Poured forth, poured down, a marching multitude  
 With stir about the towns ; and waggons rolled  
 With offerings for the army and the fleet.  
 Then to our hearts valour crept home again,  
 The loathèd name of Alva fanning it ;  
 Alva who did convert from our old faith  
 With many a black deed done for a white cause  
 (So spake they erewhile to it dedicate)  
 Them whom not death could change, nor fire, nor  
     sword,  
 To thirst for his undoing.

Ay, as I am a Christian man, our thirst  
 Was comparable with Queen Mary's. All

The talk was of confounding heretics,  
 The heretics the Spaniards. Yet methought,  
 'O their great multitude! Not harbour room  
 On our long coast for that great multitude.  
 They land—for who can let them?—give us battle,  
 And after give us burial. Who but they,  
 For he that liveth shall be flying north  
 To bear off wife and child. Our very graves  
 Shall Spaniards dig, and in the daisied grass  
 Trample them down.'

Ay, whoso will be brave,  
 Let him be brave beforehand. After th' event  
 If by good pleasure of God it go as then  
 He shall be brave an' liketh him. I say  
 Was no man but that deadly peril feared.

Nights riding two. Scant rest. Days riding three,  
 Then Foulkstone. Need is none to tell all forth  
 The gathering stores and men, the charter'd ship  
 That I, with two, my friends, got ready for sea.  
 Ready she was, so many another, small  
 But nimble; and we sailing hugged the shore,  
 Scarce venturing out, so Drake had willed, a league,  
 And running westward aye as best we might,  
 When suddenly—behold them!

On they rocked,  
 Majestical, slow, sailing with the wind.

O such a sight ! O such a sight, mine eyes,  
Never shall you see more !

In crescent form,

A vasty crescent nigh two leagues across  
From horn to horn, the lesser ships within,  
The great without, they did bestride as 't were  
And make a township on the narrow seas.

It was about the point of dawn : and light.  
All grey the sea, and ghostly grey the ships ;  
And after in the offing rocked our fleet,  
Having lain quiet in the summer dark.

O then methought, 'Flash, blessed gold of dawn,  
And touch the topsails of our Admiral,  
That he may after guide an emulous flock,  
Old England's innocent white bleating lambs.  
Let Spain within a pike's length hear them bleat,  
Delivering of their pretty talk in a tongue  
Whose meaning cries not for interpreter.'

And while I spoke, their topsails, friend and foe,  
Glittered—and there was noise of guns ; pale smoke  
Lagged after, curdling on the sun-fleck'd main.  
And after that ? What after that, my soul ?  
Who ever saw weakling white butterflies  
Chasing of gallant swans, and charging them,  
And spitting at them long red streaks of flame ?

We saw the ships of England even so  
 As in my vaunting wish that mocked itself  
 With 'Fool, O fool, to brag at the edge of loss.'  
 We saw the ships of England even so  
 Run at the Spaniards on a wind, lay to,  
 Bespatter them with hail of battle, then  
 Take their prerogative of nimble steerage,  
 Fly off, and ere the enemy, heavy in hand,  
 Delivered his reply to the wasteful wave  
 That made its grave of foam, race out of range,  
 Then tack and crowd all sail, and after them  
 Again.

So harass'd they that mighty foe,  
 Moving in all its bravery to the east.  
 And some were fine with pictures of the saints,  
 Angels with flying hair and peakèd wings,  
 And high red crosses wrought upon their sails;  
 From every mast brave flag or ensign flew,  
 And their long silken pennons serpented  
 Loose to the morning. And the galley slaves,  
 Albeit their chains did clink, sang at the oar.

The sea was striped e'en like a tiger skin  
 With wide ship wakes.

And many cried, amazed,  
 'What means their patience?'

'Lo you,' others said,  
 'They pay with fear for their great costliness.'

Some of their costliest needs must other guard ;  
Once guarded and in port look to yourselves,  
They count one hundred and fifty. It behoves  
Better they suffer this long running fight—  
Better for them than that they give us battle,  
And so delay the shelter of their roads.

‘Two of their caravels we sank, and one  
(Fouled with her consort in the rigging) took  
Ere she could catch the wind when she rode free.  
And we have riddled many a sail, and split  
Of spars a score or two. What then? To-morrow  
They look to straddle across the strait, and hold—  
Having aye Calais for a shelter—hold  
Our ships in fight. To-morrow shall give account  
For our to-day. They will not we pass north  
To meddle with Parma’s flotilla ; their hope  
Being Parma, and a convoy they would be  
For his flat boats that bode invasion to us ;  
And if he reach to London—ruin, defeat.’

Three fleets the sun went down on, theirs of fame  
Th’ Armada. After space old England’s few ;  
And after that our dancing cockle-shells,  
The volunteers. They took some pride in us,  
For we were nimble, and we brought them powder,  
Shot, weapons. They were short of these. Ill found,  
Ill found. The bitter fruit of evil thrift.

But while obsequious, darting here and there,  
We took their messages from ship to ship,  
From ship to shore, the moving majesties  
Made Calais Roads, cast anchor, all their less  
In the middle ward ; their greater ships outside  
Impregnable castles fearing not assault.

So did we read their thought, and read it wrong,  
While after the running fight we rode at ease,  
For many (as is the way of Englishmen)  
Having made light of our stout deeds, and light  
O' the effects proceeding, saw these spread  
To view. The Spanish Admiral's mighty host,  
Albeit not broken, harass'd.

Some did tow  
Others that we had plagued, disabled, rent ;  
Many full heavily damaged made their berths.

Then did the English anchor out of range.  
To close was not their wisdom with such foe,  
Rather to chase him, following in the rear.  
Ay, truly they were giants in our eyes  
And in our own. They took scant heed of us,  
And we looked on, and knew not what to think,  
Only that we were lost men, a lost Isle,  
• In every Spaniard's mind, both great and small.

But no such thought had place in Howard's soul,  
And when 't was dark, and all their sails were furled,



When the wind veered a few points to the west,  
And the tide turned ruffling along the roads,  
He sent eight fireships forging down to them.

Terrible ! Terrible !

Blood-red pillars of reek  
They looked on that vast host and troubled it,  
As on th' Egyptian host One looked of old.

Then all the heavens were rent with a great cry,  
The red avengers went right on, right on,  
For none could let them ; then was ruin, reek, flame ;  
Against th' unwieldy huge leviathans  
They drave, they fell upon them as wild beasts,  
And all together they did plunge and grind ;  
Their reefed sails set a-blazing, these flew loose  
And forth like banners of destruction sped.  
It was to look on as the body of hell  
Seething ; and some, their cables cut, ran foul  
Of one the other, while the ruddy fire  
Sped on aloft. One ship was stranded. One  
Foundered, and went down burning ; all the sea  
Red as an angry sunset was made fell  
With smoke and blazing spars that rode upright,  
For as the fireships burst they scattered forth  
Full dangerous wreckage. All the sky they scored  
With flying sails and rocking masts, and yards  
Licked of long flames. And flitting tinder sank

In eddies on the plagued mixed mob of ships  
 That cared no more for harbour, and were fain  
 At any hazard to be forth, and leave  
 Their berths in the blood-red haze.

It was at twelve

O' the clock when this fell out, for as the eight  
 Were towed, and left upon the friendly tide  
 To stalk like evil angels over the deep  
 And stare upon the Spaniards, we did hear  
 Their midnight bells. It was at morning dawn  
 After our mariners thus had harried them  
 I looked my last upon their fleet,—and all,  
 That night had cut their cables, put to sea,  
 And scattering wide towards the Flemish coast  
 Did seem to make for Greveline.

As for us,

The captains told us off to wait on them,  
 Bearers of wounded enemies and friends,  
 Bearers of messages, bearers of store.

We saw not ought, but heard enough : we heard  
 (And God be thanked) of that long scattering chase  
 And driving of Sidonia from his hope,  
 Parma, who could not ought without his ships  
 And looked for them to break the Dutch blockade,  
 He meanwhile chafing lion-like in his lair.  
 We heard—and he—for all one summer day,  
 Fenning and Drake and Raynor, Fenton, Cross,

And more, by Greveline, where they once again  
 Did get the wind o' the Spaniards, noise of guns.  
 For coming with the wind, wielding themselves  
 Which way they listed (while in close array  
 The Spaniards stood but on defence), our own  
 Went at them, charged them high and charged them sore,  
 And gave them broadside after broadside. Ay,  
 Till all the shot was spent both great and small.  
 It failed ; and in regard of that same want  
 They thought it not convenient to pursue  
 Their vessels farther.

They were huge withal,  
 And might not be encounter'd one to one,  
 But close conjoined they fought, and poured great store  
 Of ordnance at our ships, though many of theirs,  
 Shot thorow and thorow, scarce might keep afloat.

Many were captured fighting, many sank.  
 This news they brought returned perforce, and left  
 The Spaniards forging north. Themselves did watch  
 The river mouth, till Howard, his new store  
 Gathered, encounter coveting, once more  
 Made after them with Drake.

And lo ! the wind  
 Got up to help us. He yet flying north  
 (Their doughty Admiral) made all his wake  
 To smoke, and would not end to fight, but strewed  
 The ocean with his wreckage. And the wind

Drave him before it, and the storm was fell,  
And he went up to th' uncouth northern sea.

There did our mariners leave him. Then did joy  
Run like a sunbeam over the land, and joy  
Rule in the stout heart of a regnant Queen.

But now the counsel came, 'Every man home,  
For after Scotland rounded, when he curves  
Southward, and all the batter'd armament,  
What hinders on our undefended coast  
To land where'er he listeth? Every man  
Home.'

And we mounted and did open forth  
Like a great fan, to east, to north, to west,  
And rumour met us flying, filtering  
Down through the border. News of wicked joy,  
The wreckers rich in the Faroes, and the Isles  
Orkney, and all the clansmen full of gear  
Gathered from helpless mariners tempted in  
To their undoing; while a treacherous crew  
Let the storm work upon their lives its will,  
Spoiled them and gathered all their riches up.  
Then did they meet like fate from Irish kernes,  
Who dealt with them according to their wont.

In a great storm of wind that tore green leaves  
And dashed them wet upon me, came I home.



Was one) no drop of water mote they drink  
For love of God nor love of gold.

I rose

And hasted ; I was soon among the folk,  
But late for work. The crew, spent, faint, and bruised,  
Saved for the most part of our men, lay prone  
In grass, and women served them bread and mead,  
Other the sea laid decently along  
Ready for burial. And a litter stood .  
In shade. Upon it lying a goodly man,  
The govourner or the captain as it seemed,  
Dead in his stiff gold-broider'd bravery,  
And epaulet and sword. They must have loved  
That man, for many had died to bring him in,  
Their boats stove in were stranded here and there.  
In one—but how I know not—brought they him,  
And he was laid upon a folded flag,  
Many times doubled for his greater ease,  
'That was our thought—and we made signs to them  
He should have sepulture. But when they knew  
They must needs leave him, for some marched them off  
For more safe custody, they made great moan.

After, with two my neighbours drawing nigh,  
One of them touched the Spaniard's hand and said,  
' Dead is he but not cold ; ' the other then,  
' Nay in good truth methinks he be not dead.'  
Again the first, ' An' if he breatheth yet

He lies at his last gasp.' And this went off,  
And left us two, that by the litter stayed,  
Looking on one another, and we looked  
(For neither willed to speak), and yet looked on.  
Then would he have me know the meet was fixed  
For nine o' the clock, and to be brief with you  
He left me. And I had the Spaniard home.  
What other could be done? I had him home.  
Men on his litter bare him, set him down  
In a fair chamber that was nigh the hall.

And yet he waked not from his deathly swoon,  
Albeit my wife did try her skill, and now  
Bad lay him on a bed, when lo the folds  
Of that great ensign covered store of gold,  
Rich Spanish ducats, raiment, Moorish blades  
Chased in right goodly wise, and missals rare,  
And other gear. I locked it for my part  
Into an armoury, and that fair flag  
(While we did talk full low till he should end)  
Spread over him. Methought, the man shall die  
Under his country's colours; he was brave,  
His deadly wound to that doth testify.

And when 't was seemly order'd, Rosamund,  
My daughter, who had looked not yet on death,  
Came in, a face all marvel, pity, and dread—  
Lying against her shoulder sword-long flowers,



White hollyhocks to cross upon his breast.  
Slowly she turned as of that sight afeard,  
But while with daunted heart she moved anigh,  
His eyelids quiver'd, quiver'd then the lip ;  
And he, reviving, with a sob looked up  
And set on her the midnight of his eyes.

Then she, in act to place the burial gift  
Bending above him, and her flaxen hair  
Fall'n to her hand, drew back and stood upright  
Comely and tall, her innocent fair face  
Cover'd with blushes more of joy than shame.  
' Father,' she cried, ' O father, I am glad.  
Look you ! the enemy liveth.' ' 'Tis enough,  
My maiden,' quoth her mother, ' thou may'st forth,  
But say an Avè first for him with me.'

Then they with hands upright at foot o' his bed  
Knelt, his dark dying eyes at gaze on them,  
Till as I think for wonder at them, more  
Than for his proper strength, he could not die.

So in obedient wise my daughter risen,  
And going, let a smile of comforting cheer  
Lift her sweet lip, and that was all of her  
For many a night and day that he beheld.

And then withal my dame, a leech of skill,  
Tended the Spaniard fain to heal his wound,

Her women aiding at their best. And he  
'Twixt life and death awaken'd in the night  
Full oft in his own tongue would make his moan,  
And when he whisper'd any word I knew,  
If I was present, for to pleasure him,  
'Then made I repetition of the same.  
'Cordova,' quoth he faintly, 'Cordova,'  
'T was the first word he mutter'd. 'Ay, we know,'  
Quoth I, 'the stoutness of that fight ye made  
Against the Moors and their Mahometry,  
And dispossess'd the men of fame, the fierce  
Khalifs of Cordova—thy home beliké,  
Thy city. A fair city Cordova.'

Then after many days, while his wound healed,  
He with abundant seemly sign set forth  
His thanks, but as for language had we none,  
And oft he strove and failed to let us know  
Some wish he had, but could not, so a week,  
Two weeks went by. Then Rosamund my girl,  
Hearing her mother plain on this, she saith,  
'So please you, madam, show the enemy  
A Psalter in our English tongue, and fetch  
And give him that same book my father found  
Wrapped in the ensign. Are they not the same  
Those holy words? The Spaniard being devout,  
He needs must know them.'

'Peace, thou pretty fool!

Is this a time to teach an alien tongue ?  
Her mother made for answer. 'He is sick,  
The Spaniard.' 'Cry you mercy,' quoth my girl,  
'But I did think 't were easy to let show  
How both the Psalters are of meaning like ;  
If he know Latin, and 't is like he doth,  
So might he choose a verse to tell his thought.'

Then said I (ay, I did !) 'The girl shall try,'  
And straight I took her to the Spaniard's side,  
And he, admiring at her, all his face  
Changed to a joy that almost showed as fear,  
So innocent holy she did look, so grave  
Her pitiful eyes.

She sat beside his bed,  
He covered with the ensign yet ; and took  
And showed the Psalters both, and she did speak  
Her English words, but gazing was enough  
For him at her sweet dimple, her blue eyes  
That shone, her English blushes. Rosamund,  
My beautiful dear child. He did but gaze,  
And not perceive her meaning till she touched  
His hand, and in her Psalter showed the word.

Then was all light to him ; he laughed for joy,  
And took the Latin Missal. O full soon,  
Alas, how soon, one read the other's thought !  
Before she left him, she had learned his name

Alonzo, told him hers, and found the care  
Made night and day uneasy—Cordova,  
There dwelt his father, there his kin, nor knew  
Whether he lived or died, whether in thrall  
To the Islanders for lack of ransom pined  
Or rued the galling yoke of slavery.

So did he cast him on our kindness. I—  
And care not who may know it—I was kind,  
And for that our stout Queen did think foul scorn  
To kill the Spanish prisoners, and to guard  
So many could not, liefer being to rid  
Our country of them than to spite their own,  
I made him as I might that matter learn,  
Eking scant Latin with my daughter's wit,  
And told him men let forth and driven forth  
Did crowd our harbours for the ports of Spain,  
By one of whom, he, with good aid of mine,  
Should let his tidings go, and I plucked forth  
His ducats that a meet reward might be.  
Then he, the water standing in his eyes,  
Made old King David's words due thanks convey.

So Rosamund, this all made plain, arose  
And curtsey'd to the Spaniard. Ah, methinks  
I yet behold her, gracious, innocent,  
And flaxen-haired, and blushing maidenly,  
When turning she retired, and his black eyes,

That hunger'd after her, did follow on ;  
And I bethought me, 'Thou shalt see no more,  
Thou goodly enemy, my one ewe lamb.'

O, I would make short work of this. The wound  
Healed, and the Spaniard rose, then could he stand,  
And then about his chamber walk at ease.

Now we had counsell'd how to have him home,  
And that same trading vessel beating up  
The Irish Channel at my will, that same  
I charter'd for to serve me in the war,  
Next was I minded should mine enemy  
Deliver to his father, and his land.  
Daily we looked for her, till in our cove,  
Upon that morn when first the Spaniard walked,  
Behold her rocking ; and I hasted down  
And left him waiting in the house.

Woe 's me !

All being ready speed I home, and lo  
My Rosamund, that by the Spaniard sat  
Upon a cushion'd settle, book in hand.  
I needs must think how in the deep alcove  
Thick chequer'd shadows of the window-glass  
Did fall across her kirtle and her locks,  
For I did see her thus no more.

She held

Her Psalter, and he his, and slowly read

Till he would stop her at the needed word.  
 'O well is thee,' she read, my Rosamund,  
 'O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be ;  
 Thy wife—' and there he stopped her, and he took  
 And kissed her hand, and show'd in 's own a ring,  
 Taking no heed of me, no heed at all.

Then I burst forth, the choler red i' my face  
 When I did see her blush, and put it on.  
 'Give me,' quoth I, and Rosamund, afraid,  
 Gave me the ring. I set my heel on it,  
 Crushed it, and sent the rubies scattering forth,  
 And did in righteous anger storm at him.  
 'What! what!' quoth I, 'before her father's eyes,  
 Thou universal villain, thou ingrate,  
 Thou enemy whom I shelter'd, fed, restored,  
 Most basest of mankind!' And Rosamund,  
 Arisen, her forehead pressed against mine arm,  
 And 'Father,' cries she, 'father.'

And I stormed

At him, while in his Spanish he replied  
 As one would speak me fair. 'Thou Spanish hound !'  
 'Father,' she pleaded. 'Alien vile,' quoth I,  
 'Plucked from the death, wilt thou repay me thus ?  
 It is but three times thou hast set thine eyes  
 On this my daughter.' 'Father,' moans my girl ;  
 And I, not willing to be so withstood,  
 Spoke roughly to her. Then the Spaniard's eyes  
 Blazed—then he stormed at me in his own tongue,

And all his Spanish arrogance and pride  
Broke witless on my wrathful English. Then  
He let me know, for I perceived it well,  
He reckon'd him mine equal, thought foul scorn  
Of my displeasure, and was wroth with me  
As I with him. 'Father,' sighed Rosamund.  
'Go, get thee to thy mother, girl,' quoth I.  
And slowly, slowly, she betook herself  
Down the long hall ; in lowly wise she went  
And made her moan.

But when my girl was gone  
I stood at fault, th' occasion master'd me ;  
Belike it master'd him, for both fell mute.  
I calmed me, and he calmed him as he might,  
For I bethought me I was yet an host,  
And he bethought him on the worthiness  
Of my first deeds.

So made I sign to him  
The tide was up, and soon I had him forth,  
Delivered him his goods, commended him  
To the captain o' the vessel, then plucked off  
My hat, in seemly fashion taking leave,  
And he was not outdone, but every way  
Gave me respect, and on the deck we two  
Parted, as I did hope, to meet no more.

Alas ! my Rosamund, my Rosamund !  
She did not weep, no. Plain upon me, no.  
Her eyes mote well have lost the trick of tears :



As new-washed flowers shake off the down-dropt rain,  
And make denial of it, yet more blue  
And fair of favour afterward, so they.  
The wild woodrose was not more fresh of blee  
Than her soft dimpled cheek : but I beheld,  
Come home, a token hung about her neck,  
Sparkling upon her bosom for his sake  
Her love, the Spaniard ; she denied it not,  
All unaware, good sooth, such love was bale.

And all that day went like another day,  
Ay, all the next ; then was I glad at heart ;  
Methought, ' I am glad thou wilt not waste thy youth  
Upon an alien man, mine enemy,  
Thy nation's enemy. In truth, in truth,  
This likes me very well. My most dear child,  
Forget yon grave dark mariner. The Lord  
Everlasting,' I besought, ' bring it to pass.'

Stealeth a darker day within my hall,  
A winter day of wind and driving foam.  
They tell me that my girl is sick—and yet  
Not very sick. I may not hour by hour,  
More than one watching of a moon that wanes,  
Make chronicle of change. A parlous change  
When he looks back to that same moon at full.

Ah ! ah ! methought, 't will pass. It did not pass,  
Though never she made moan. I saw the rings

Drop from her small white wasted hand. And I,  
Her father, tamed of grief, I would have given  
My land, my name to have her as of old.  
Ay, Rosamund I speak of with the small  
White face. Ay, Rosamund. O near as white,  
And mournfuller by much, her mother dear  
Drooped by her couch ; and while of hope and fear  
Lifted or left, as by a changeful tide,  
We thought 'The girl is better,' or we thought  
'The girl will die,' that jewel from her neck  
She drew, and prayed me send it to her love ;  
A token she was true e'en to the end.  
What matter'd now ? But whom to send, and how  
To reach the man ? I found an old poor priest,  
Some peril 't was for him and me, she writ  
My pretty Rosamund her heart's farewell,  
She kissed the letter, and that old poor priest,  
Who had eaten of my bread, and shelter'd him  
Under my roof in troublous times, he took,  
And to content her on this errand went,  
While she as done with earth did wait the end.

Mankind bemoan them on the bitterness  
Of death. Nay, rather let them chide the grief  
Of living, chide the waste of mother-love  
For babes that joy to get away to God ;  
The waste of work and moil and thought and thrift  
And father-love for sons that heed it not,

And daughters lost and gone. Ay, let them chide  
 These. Yet I chide not. That which I have done  
 Was rightly done ; and what thereon befell  
 Could make no right a wrong, e'en were 't to do  
 Again.

I will be brief. The days drag on,  
 My soul forebodes her death, my lonely age.  
 Once I despondent in the moaning wood  
 Look out, and lo a caravel at sea,  
 A man that climbs the rock, and presently  
 The Spaniard !

I did greet him, proud no more.  
 He had braved durance, as I knew, ay death,  
 To land on th' Island soil. In broken words  
 Of English he did ask me how she fared.  
 Quoth I, ' She is dying, Spaniard ; Rosamund  
 My girl will die ; ' but he is fain, saith he,  
 To talk with her, and all his mind to speak ;  
 I answer, ' Ay, my whilome enemy,  
 But she is dying.' ' Nay, now nay,' quoth he,  
 ' So be she liveth,' and he moved me yet  
 For answer ; then quoth I, ' Come life, come death,  
 What thou wilt, say.'

Soon made we Rosamund  
 Aware, she lying on the settle, wan  
 As a lily in the shade, and while she not  
 Believed for marvelling, comes he roundly in,  
 The tall grave Spaniard, and with but one smile,

One look of ruth upon her small pale face  
 All slowly as with unaccustom'd mouth,  
 Betakes him to that English he hath conned,  
 Setting the words out plain :

‘ Child ! Rosamund !

Love ! An so please thee, I would be thy man.  
 By all the saints will I be good to thee.  
 Come.’

Come ! what think you, would she come? Ay, ay.  
 They love us, but our love is not their life.  
 For the dark mariner's love lived Rosamund.  
 Soon for his kiss she bloomed, smiled for his smile.  
 (The Spaniard reaped e'en as th' Evangel saith,  
 And bore in 's bosom forth my golden sheaf.)  
 She loved her father and her mother well,  
 But loved the Spaniard better. It was sad  
 To part, but she did part ; and it was far  
 To go, but she did go. The priest was brought,  
 The ring was bless'd that bound my Rosamund,  
 She sailed, and I shall never see her more.

One soweth and another reapeth. Ay,  
 Too true ! too true !



## ECHO AND THE FERRY.

**A**Y, Oliver! I was but seven, and he was eleven;

He looked at me pouting and rosy. I blushed where I stood.

They had told us to play in the orchard (and I only seven!

A small guest at the farm); but he said, 'Oh, a girl was no good!'

So he whistled and went, he went over the stile to the wood.

It was sad, it was sorrowful! Only a girl--only seven! At home in the dark London smoke I had not found it out.

The pear-trees looked on in their white, and blue birds flash'd about,

And they too were angry as Oliver. Were they eleven? I thought so. Yes, everyone else was eleven--eleven!

So Oliver went, but the cowslips were tall at my feet,  
And all the white orchard with fast-falling blossom was litter'd;

And under and over the branches those little birds  
twitter'd,  
While hanging head downwards they scolded because I  
was seven.

A pity. A very great pity. One should be eleven.  
But soon I was happy, the smell of the world was so  
sweet,  
And I saw a round hole in an apple-tree rosy and  
old.

Then I knew ! for I peeped, and I felt it was right they  
should scold !

Eggs small and eggs many. For gladness I broke into  
laughter ;

And then some one else—oh, how softly !—came after,  
came after

With laughter—with laughter came after.

And no one was near us to utter that sweet mocking  
call,

That soon very tired sank low with a mystical fall.

But this was the country—perhaps it was close under  
heaven ;

Oh, nothing so likely ; the voice might have come from  
it even.

I knew about heaven. But this was the country, of  
this

Light, blossom, and piping, and flashing of wings not at  
all.

Not at all. No. But one little bird was an easy for-  
giver :

She peeped, she drew near as I moved from her domicile  
small,

Then flashed down her hole like a dart—like a dart from  
the quiver.

And I waded atween the long grasses and felt it was  
bliss.

—So this was the country ; clear dazzle of azure and  
shiver

And whisper of leaves, and a humming all over the tall  
White branches, a humming of bees. And I came to  
the wall—

A little low wall—and looked over, and there was the  
river,

The lane that led on to the village, and then the sweet  
river

Clear shining and slow, she had far far to go from her  
snow ;

But each rush gleamed a sword in the sunlight to guard  
her long flow,

And she murmur'd, methought, with a speech very soft  
—very low.

‘The ways will be long, but the days will be long,’ quoth  
the river,

‘To me a long liver, long, long !’ quoth the river—the  
river.



I dreamed of the country that night, of the orchard, the  
sky,

The voice that had mocked coming after and over and  
under.

But at last—in a day or two namely—Eleven and I  
Were very fast friends, and to him I confided the wonder.  
He said that was Echo. ‘Was Echo a wise kind of bee  
That had learned how to laugh : could it laugh in one’s  
ear and then fly

And laugh again yonder?’ ‘No ; Echo’—he whispered  
it low—

‘Was a woman, they said, but a woman whom no one  
could see

And no one could find ; and he did not believe it, not  
he,

But he could not get near for the river that held us  
asunder.

Yet I that had money—a shilling, a whole silver shilling—  
We might cross if I thought I would spend it.’ ‘Oh yes,  
I was willing’—

And we ran hand in hand, we ran down to the ferry, the  
ferry,

And we heard how she mocked at the folk with a voice  
clear and merry

When they called for the ferry ; but oh ! she was very—  
was very

Swift-footed. She spoke and was gone ; and when Oliver  
cried,

‘Hie over ! hie over ! you man of the ferry—the ferry !’  
By the still water’s side she was heard far and wide—she  
    replied  
And she mocked in her voice sweet and merry, ‘You  
    man of the ferry,  
You man of—you man of the ferry !’

‘Hie over !’ he shouted. The ferryman came at his  
    calling,  
Across the clear reed-border’d river he ferried us fast ;—  
Such a chase ! Hand in hand, foot to foot, we ran on ;  
    it surpass’d  
All measure her doubling—so close, then so far away  
    falling,  
Then gone, and no more. Oh ! to see her but once  
    unaware,  
And the mouth that had mocked, but we might not (yet  
    sure she was there !),  
Nor behold her wild eyes and her mystical countenance  
    fair.

We sought in the wood, and we found the wood-wren in  
    her stead ;  
In the field, and we found but the cuckoo that talked  
    overhead ;  
By the brook, and we found the reed-sparrow deep-nested,  
    in brown—  
Not Echo, fair Echo ! for Echo, sweet Echo ! was flown.

So we came to the place where the dead people wait till  
God call.

The church was among them, grey moss over roof, over  
wall.

Very silent, so low. And we stood on a green grassy  
mound

And looked in at a window, for Echo, perhaps, in her  
round

Might have come in to hide there. But no ; every oak-  
carven seat

Was empty. We saw the great Bible—old, old, very  
old,

And the parson's great Prayer-book beside it ; we heard  
the slow beat

Of the pendulum swing in the tower ; we saw the clear  
gold

Of a sunbeam float down to the aisle and then waver and  
play

On the low chancel step and the railing, and Oliver  
said,

'Look, Katie ! look, Katie ! when Lettice came here to  
be wed

She stood where that sunbeam drops down, and all white  
was her gown ;

And she stepped upon flowers they strew'd for her.' Then  
quoth small Seven :

'Shall I wear a white gown and have flowers to walk upon  
ever ?'

All doubtful : ' It takes a long time to grow up,' quoth  
Eleven ;

' You're so little, you know, and the church is so old, it  
can never

Last on till you're tall.' And in whispers—because it  
was old

And holy, and fraught with strange meaning, half felt,  
but not told,

Full of old parsons' prayers, who were dead, of old days,  
of old folk,

Neither heard nor beheld, but about us, in whispers we  
spoke.

Then we went from it softly and ran hand in hand to the  
strand,

While bleating of flocks and birds' piping made sweeter  
the land.

And Echo came back e'en as Oliver drew to the ferry

' O Katie !' ' O Katie !' ' Come on, then !' ' Come  
on, then !' ' For, see,

The round sun, all red, lying low by the tree'—' by the  
tree.'

' By the tree.' Ay, she mocked him again, with her voice  
sweet and merry :

' Hie over !' ' Hie over !' ' You man of the ferry'—  
' the ferry.'

' You man of the ferry—

You man of—you man of—the ferry.'

Ay, here—it was here that we woke her, the Echo of  
old ;

All life of that day seems an echo, and many times told.  
Shall I cross by the ferry to-morrow, and come in my  
white

To that little low church? and will Oliver meet me  
anon?

Will it all seem an echo from childhood pass'd over—  
pass'd on?

Will the grave parson bless us? Hark, hark! in the dim  
failing light

I hear her! As then the child's voice clear and high,  
sweet and merry

Now she mocks the man's tone with 'Hie over! Hie  
over the ferry!'

'And Katie.' 'And Katie.' 'Art out with the glow-  
worms to-night,

My Katie?' 'My Katie!' For gladness I break into  
laughter

And tears. Then it all comes again as from far-away  
years ;

Again, some one else—oh, how softly!—with laughter  
comes after,

Comes after—with laughter comes after.



PRELUDES TO A PENNY READING.

*A Schoolroom.*

SCHOOLMASTER (*not certificated*), VICAR, and CHILD.



VICAR. Why did you send for me? I hope all's right?

Schoolmaster. Well, sir, we thought this end o' the room was dark.

V. Indeed! So 't is. There's my new study lamp—

S. 'T would stand, sir, well beside yon laurel wreath.

Shall I go fetch it?

V. Do, we must not fail.

Bring candles also.

[*Exit Schoolmaster. Vicar arranges chairs.*]

Now, small six years old,

And why may you be here?

Child. I'm helping father;

But, father, why d' you take such pains?

V. Sweet soul,

That's what I'm for!

C. What, and for nothing else?

V. Yes! I'm to bring thee up to be a man.

C. And what am I for ?

V. There, I 'm busy now.

C. Am I to bring you up to be a child ?

V. Perhaps ! Indeed, I have heard it said thou art.

C. Then when may I begin ?

V. I 'm busy, I say.

Begin to-morrow an thou canst, my son,

And mind to do it well. [*Exit Vicar and Child.*]

*Enter a group of women, and some children.*

*Mrs. Thorpe.* Fine lot o' lights !

*Mrs. Jillifer.* Should be ! Would folk put on their  
Sunday best

I' the week unless they looked to have it seen ?

What, you here, neighbour !

*Mrs. Smith.* Ay, you may say that.

Old Madam called ; said she, ' My son would feel

So sorry if you did not come,' and slipped

The penny in my hand, she did ; said I,

' Ma'am, that 's not it. In short, some say your last

Was worth the penny and more. I know a man,

A sober man, who said, and stuck to it,

*Worth a good twopence.* But I 'm strange, I 'm shy.'

' We hope you 'll come for once,' said she. In short,

I said I would to oblige 'em.

*Mrs. Green.* Ah, 't was well.

*Mrs. S.* But I feel strange, and music gets i' my  
throat,



It always did. And singers be so smart,  
Ladies and folk from other parishes,  
Candles and cheering, greens and flowers and all,  
I was not used to such in my young day ;  
We kept ourselves at home.

*Mrs. J.* Never say ' used,'  
The most of us have many a thing to do  
We were not used to. If you come to that,  
Why none of us are used to growing old,  
It takes us by surprise, as one may say,  
That work, when we begin 't, and yet 't is work  
That all of us must do.

*Mrs. G.* Nay, nay, not all.

*Mrs. J.* I ask your pardon, neighbour ; you be right,  
Not all.

*Mrs. G.* And my sweet maid scarce three months  
dead.

*Mrs. J.* I ask your pardon truly.

*Mrs. G.* No, my dear,  
Thou 'lt never see old days. I cannot stint  
To fret, the maiden was but twelve years old,  
So toward, such a scholar.

*Mrs. S.* Ay, when God,  
That knows, comes down to choose, He 'll take the best.

*Mrs. T.* But I 'm right glad you came, it pleases *them*  
My son, that loves his book, ' Mother,' said he,  
' Go to the Reading when you have a chance,  
For there you get a change, and you see life.'

But Reading or no Reading, I am slow  
 'To learn. When parson after comes his rounds,  
 'Did it,' to ask with a persuading smile,  
 'Open your mind?' the woman doth not live  
 Feels more a fool.

*Mrs. J.* I always tell him 'Yes,'  
 For he means well. Ay, and I like the songs.  
 Have you heard say what they shall read to-night?

*Mrs. S.* Neighbour, I hear 't is something of the East.  
 But what, I ask you, is the East to us,  
 And where d' ye think it lies?

*Mrs. J.* The children know,  
 At least they say they do; there 's nothing deep  
 Nor nothing strange but they get hold on it.

*Enter SCHOOLMASTER and a dozen children.*

*S.* Now ladies, ladies, you must please to sit  
 More close; the room fills fast, and all these lads  
 And maidens either have to sing before  
 The Reading, or else after. By your leave  
 I 'll have them in the front, I want them here.

[*The women make room.*]

*Enter ploughmen, villagers, servants, and children.*

And mark me, boys, if I hear cracking o' nuts,  
 Or see you flicking acorns and what not  
 While folks from other parishes observe,

You'll hear on it when you don't look to. Tom  
 And Jemmy and Roger, sing as loud's ye can,  
 Sing as the maidens do, are they afraid?  
 And now I'm stationed handy facing you,  
 Friends all, I'll drop a word by your good leave.

*Young ploughman.* Do, master, do, we like your words  
 a vast.

Though there be nought to back 'em up, ye see,  
 As when we were smaller.

*S.* Mark me, then, my lads.

When Lady Laura sang, 'I don't think much,'  
 Says her fine coachman, 'of your manners here.  
 We drove eleven miles in the dark, it rained,  
 And ruts in your cross roads are deep. We're here,  
 My lady sings, they sit all open-mouthed,  
 And when she's done they never give one cheer.'

*Old man.* Be folks to clap if they don't like the song?

*S.* Certain, for manners.

*Enter VICAR, wife, various friends with violins and a  
 flute. They come to a piano, and one begins softly to  
 tune his violin, while the Vicar speaks.*

*V.* Friends, since there is a place where you must hear  
 When I stand up to speak, I would not now  
 If there were any other found to bid  
 You welcome. Welcome, then; these with me ask  
 No better than to please, and in good sooth  
 I ever find you willing to be pleased.

When I demand not more, but when we fain  
Would lead you to some knowledge fresh, and ask  
Your careful heed, I hear that some of you  
Have said, 'What good to know, what good to us?  
He puts us all to school, and our school days  
Should be at end. Nay, if they needs must teach,  
Then let them teach us what shall mend our lot;  
The laws are strict on us, the world is hard.'  
You friends and neighbours, may I dare to speak?  
I know the laws are strict, and the world hard,  
For ever will the world help that man up  
'That is already coming up, and still  
And ever help him down that's going down.  
Yet say, 'I will take the words out of thy mouth,  
O world, being yet more strict with mine own life.  
Thou law, to gaze shall not be worth thy while  
On whom beyond thy power doth rule himself.'  
Yet seek to know, for whoso seek to know  
They seek to rise, and best they mend their lot.  
Methinks, if Adam and Eve in their garden days  
Had scorned the serpent, and obediently  
Continued God's good children, He Himself  
Had led them to the Tree of Knowledge soon  
And bid them eat the fruit thereof, and yet  
Not find it apples of death.

*Vicar's wife (aside).* Now, dearest John,  
We're ready. Lucky too! you always go  
Above the people's heads.

*Young farmer stands forward, Vicar presenting him.*

## SONG.

## I

Sparkle of snow and of frost,  
    Blythe air and the joy of cold,  
Their grace and good they have lost,  
    As print o' her foot by the fold.  
Let me back to yon desert sand,  
    Rose-lipped love—from the fold,  
Flower-fair girl—from the fold,  
    Let me back to the sultry land.  
The world is empty of cheer,  
    Forlorn, forlorn, and forlorn,  
As the night-owl's sob of fear,  
    As Memnon moaning at morn.  
    For love of thee, my dear,  
    I have lived a better man,  
    O my Mary Anne,  
    My Mary Anne.

## II

Away, away, and away,  
    To an old palm-land of tombs,  
Washed clear of our yesterday  
    And where never a snowdrop blooms,

Nor wild becks talk as they go  
 Of tender hope we had known,  
 Nor mosses of memory grow  
 All over the wayside stone.

## III

Farewell, farewell, and farewell,  
 As voice of a lover's sigh  
 In the wind let yon willow wave  
 'Farewell, farewell, and farewell.'  
 The sparkling frost-stars brave  
 On thy shrouded bosom lie ;  
 Thou art gone apart to dwell,  
 But I fain would have said good-bye.  
 For love of thee in thy grave  
 I have lived a better man,  
 Oh my Mary Anne,  
 My Mary Anne.

*Mrs. Thorpe (aside).* O hearts ! why, what a song !  
 To think on it, and he a married man !

*Mrs. Fillifer (aside).* Bless you, that makes for nothing,  
 nothing at all,  
 They take no heed upon the words. His wife,  
 Look you, as pleased as may be, smiles on him.

*Mrs. T. (aside).* Neighbours, there's one thing beats  
 me. We've enough  
 Of trouble in the world ; I've cried my fill

Many and many a time by my own fire :  
 Now why, I'll ask you, should it comfort me  
 And ease my heart when, pitiful and sweet,  
 One sings of other souls and how they mourned ?  
 A body would have thought that did not know  
 Songs must be merry, full of feast and mirth,  
 Or else would all folk flee away from them.

*Mrs. S. (aside).* 'T is strange, and I too love the sad  
 ones best.

*Mrs. T. (aside).* Ay, how they clap him! 'T is as who  
 should say,

Sing ! we were pleased ; sing us another song ;  
 As if they did not know he loves to sing.  
 Well may he, not an organ pipe they blow  
 On Sunday in the church is half so sweet ;  
 But he's a hard man.

*Mrs. J. (aside).* Mark me, neighbours all,  
 Hard though he be—ay, and the mistress hard—  
 If he do sing 't will be a sorrowful  
 Sad tale of sweethearts, that shall make you wish  
 Your own time would come over again, although  
 Were partings in 't and tears. Hist ! now he sings.

*Young farmer sings again.*

'Come hither, come hither.' The broom was in blossom  
 all over yon rise ;  
 There went a wide murmur of brown bees about it  
 with songs from the wood.



‘We shall never be younger ! O love, let us forth, for  
the world ’neath our eyes,  
Ay, the world is made young e’en as we, and right fair  
is her youth and right good.’

Then there fell the great yearning upon me, that never  
yet went into words ;  
While lovesome and moansome thereon spake and  
falter’d the dove to the dove.  
And I came at her calling, ‘Inherit, inherit, and sing  
with the birds ;’  
I went up to the wood with the child of my heart and  
the wife of my love.

O pure ! O pathetic ! Wild hyacinths drank it, the  
dream light, apace  
Not a leaf moved at all ’neath the blue, they hung  
waiting for messages kind ;  
Tall cherry-trees dropped their white blossom that drifted  
no whit from its place,  
For the south very far out to sea had the lulling low  
voice of the wind.

And the child’s dancing foot gave us part in the ravish-  
ment almost a pain,  
An infinite tremor of life, a fond murmur that cried  
out on time,

Ah short ! must all end in the doing and spend itself  
 sweetly in vain,  
 And the promise be only fulfilment to lean from the  
 height of its prime ?

‘We shall never be younger ;’ nay, mock me not, fancy,  
 none call from yon tree ;  
 They have thrown me the world they went over, went  
 up, and, alas ! for my part  
 I am left to grow old, and to grieve, and to change ; but  
 they change not with me ;  
 They will never be older, the child of my love, and the  
 wife of my heart.

*Mrs. J.* I told you so !

*Mrs. T. (aside).* That did you, neighbour. Ay,  
 Partings, said you, and tears : I liked the song.

*Mrs. G.* Who be these coming to the front to sing ?

*Mrs. J. (aside).* Why, neighbour, these be sweethearts,  
 so ’t is said,

And there was much ado to make her sing ,  
 She would, and would not ; and he wanted her,  
 And, mayhap, wanted to be seen with her.  
 ’T is Tomlin’s pretty maid, his only one.

*Mrs. G. (aside).* I did not know the maid, so fair she  
 looks.

*Mrs. J. (aside).* He’s a right proper man she has at  
 last ;

Walks over many a mile (and counts them nought)  
 To court her after work hours, that he doth,  
 Not like her other—why, he 'd let his work  
 Go all to wrack, and lay it to his love,  
 While he would sit and look, and look and sigh.  
 Her father sent him to the right-about.  
 'If love,' said he, 'won't make a man of you,  
 Why, nothing will ! 'T is mainly that love 's for.  
 The right sort makes,' said he, 'a lad a man ;  
 The wrong sort makes,' said he, 'a man a fool.'

*Vicar presents a young man and a girl.*

DUET.

*She.* While he dreams, mine old grand-sire,  
 And yon red logs glow,  
 Honey, whisper by the fire,  
 Whisper, honey, low.

*He.* Honey, high 's yon weary hill,  
 Stiff 's yon weary loam ;  
 Lacks the work o' my goodwill,  
 Fain I 'd take thee home.

O how much longer, and longer, and longer,  
 An' how much longer shall the waiting last ?  
 Berries red are grown, April birds are flown,  
 Martinmas gone over, ay, and harvest past.

*She.* Honey, bide, the time 's awry,  
Bide awhile, let be.

*He.* Take my wage then, lay it by,  
Till 't come back with thee.

The red money, the white money,  
Both to thee I bring—

*She.* Bring ye ought beside, honey?

*He.* Honey, ay, the ring.

*Duet.* But how much longer, and longer, and longer,  
O how much longer shall the waiting last?  
Berries red are grown, April birds are flown,  
Martinmas gone over, and the harvest past.

[*Applause.*]

*Mrs. S. (aside).* O she's a pretty maid, and sings so  
small

And high, 't is like a flute. And she must blush  
Till all her face is roses newly blown.

How folks do clap! She knows not where to look.

There now she's off; he standing like a man  
To face them.

*Mrs. G. (aside).* Makes his bow, and after her;  
But what's the good of clapping when they're gone?

*Mrs. T. (aside).* Why 't is a London fashion as I'm told,  
And means they'd have 'em back to sing again.

*Mrs. J. (aside).* Neighbours, look where her father,  
red as fire,

Sits pleased and 'shamed, smoothing his Sunday hat ;  
And Parson bustles out. Clap on, clap on.  
Coming? Not she ! There comes her sweetheart though.

*Vicar presents the young man again.*

## SONG.

## I

Rain clouds flew beyond the fell,  
No more did thunders lower,  
Patter, patter, on the beck  
Dropt a clearing shower.  
Eddying floats of creamy foam  
Flecked the waters brown,  
As we rode up to cross the ford,  
Rode up from yonder town.  
Waiting on the weather,  
She and I together,  
Waiting on the weather,  
Till the flood went down.

## II

The sun came out, the wet leaf shone,  
Dripped the wildwood vine.  
Betide me well, betide me woe,  
That hour 's for ever mine.  
With thee Mary, with thee Mary,  
Full oft I pace again,

Asleep, awake, up yonder glen,  
 And hold thy bridle rein.  
 Waiting on the weather,  
 Thou and I together,  
 Waiting on the weather,  
 Till the flood shall wane.

## III

And who, though hope did come to nought,  
 Would memory give away?  
 I lighted down, she leaned full low,  
 Nor chid that hour's delay.  
 With thee Mary, with thee Mary,  
 Methought my life to crown,  
 But we ride up, but we ride up,  
 No more from yonder town.  
 Waiting on the weather,  
 Thou and I together,  
 Waiting on the weather,  
 Till the flood go down.

*Mrs. J. (aside).* Well, very well ; but what of fiddler Sam ?

I ask you, neighbours, if 't be not his turn.  
 An honest man, and ever pays his score ;  
 Born in the parish, old, blind as a bat,  
 And strangers sing before him ; 't is a shame !

*Mrs. S. (aside).* Ay, but his daughter—

*Mrs. J. (aside).* Why, the maid's a maid  
 One would not set to guide the chant in church,  
 But when she sings to earn her father's bread,  
 The mildest mother's son may cry 'Amen.'

*Mrs. S. (aside).* They say he plays not always true.

*Mrs. J. (aside).* What then?

*Mrs. T. (aside).* Here comes my lady. She's too fat  
 by half

For love songs. O! the lace upon her gown,  
 I wish I had the getting of it up,  
 'T would be a pretty penny in my pouch.

*Mrs. J. (aside).* Be quiet now for manners.

*Vicar presents a lady, who sings.*

## I

Dark flocks of wildfowl riding out the storm  
 Upon a pitching sea,  
 Beyond grey rollers vex'd that rear and form,  
 When piping winds urge on their destiny,  
 To fall back ruined in white continually.  
 And I at our trysting stone,  
 Whereto I came down alone,  
 Was fain o' the wind's wild moan.  
 O, welcome were wrack and were rain  
 And beat of the battling main,  
 For the sake of love's sweet pain,



For the smile in two brown eyes,  
 For the love in any wise,  
 To bide though the last day dies ;  
 For a hand on my wet hair,  
 For a kiss e'en yet I wear,  
 For—bonny Jock was there.

## II

Pale precipices while the sun lay low  
     Tinct faintly of the rose,  
 And mountain islands mirror'd in a flow,  
 Forgotten of all winds (their manifold  
 Peaks reared into the glory and the glow),  
     Floated in purple and gold.  
 And I, o'er the rocks alone,  
 Of a shore all silent grown,  
 Came down to our trysting stone.  
 And sighed when the solemn ray  
 Paled in the wake o' the day.  
 'Wellaway, wellaway—  
 Comfort is not by the shore,  
 Going the gold that it wore,  
 Purple and rose are no more,  
 World and waters are wan,  
 And night will be here anon,  
 And—bonny Jock's gone.'

[*Moderate applause, and calls for fiddler Sam.*]

*Mrs. Jillifer (aside).* Now, neighbours, call again and  
be not shamed ;  
Stand by the parish, and the parish folk,  
Them that are poor. I told you ! here he comes,  
Parson looks glum, but brings him and his girl.

*The fiddler Sam plays, and his daughter sings.*

Touch the sweet string. Fly forth, my heart,  
Upon the music like a bird ;  
The silvery notes shall add their part,  
And haply yet thou shalt be heard.  
Touch the sweet string.

The youngest wren of nine  
Dimpled, dark, and merry,  
Brown her locks, and her two eyne  
Browner than a berry.

When I was not in love  
Maidens met I many ;  
Under sun now walks but one,  
Nor others mark I any.

Twin lambs, a mild-eyed ewe,  
That would her follow bleating,  
A heifer white as snow  
I'll give to my sweet sweeting.

Touch the sweet string. If yet too young,  
 O love of loves, for this my song,  
 I'll pray thee count it all unsung,  
 And wait thy leisure, wait it long.  
 Touch the sweet string.

[*Much applause.*]

*Vicar.* You hear them, Sam. You needs must play  
 again,  
 Your neighbours ask it.

*Fiddler.* Thank ye, neighbours all,  
 I have my feelings though I be but poor ;  
 I've tanged the fiddle here this forty year,  
 And I should know the trick on 't.

*The fiddler plays, and his daughter sings.*

For Exmoor—

For Exmoor, where the red deer run, my weary heart doth  
 cry.

She that will a rover wed, far her foot shall hie.

Narrow, narrow, shows the street, dull the narrow sky.

(*Buy my cherries, whiteheart cherries, good my masters,  
 buy.*)

For Exmoor—

O he left me, left alone, aye to think and sigh,

'Lambs feed down yon sunny coombe, hind and yearling  
 shy,

Mid the shrouding vapours walk now like ghosts on high.  
*(Buy my cherries, blackheart cherries, lads and lasses, buy.)*

For Exmoor—

Dear my dear, why did ye so? Evil days have I,  
 Mark no more the antler'd stag, hear the curlew cry.  
 Milking at my father's gate while he leans anigh.

*(Buy my cherries, whiteheart, blackheart, golden girls, O buy.)*

*Mrs. T. (aside).* I've known him play that Exmoor  
 song afore.

Ah me! and I'm from Exmoor. I could wish  
 To hear 't no more.

*Mrs. S. (aside).* Neighbours, 't is mighty hot.  
 Ay, now they throw the window up, that's well,  
 A body could not breathe.

*[The fiddler and his daughter go away.]*

*Mrs. Jillifer (aside).* They 'll hear no parson's preach-  
 ing, no not they!

But innocenter songs, I do allow,  
 They could not well have sung than these to-night.  
 That man knows just so well as if he saw  
 They were not welcome.

*The Vicar stands up, on the point of beginning to read, when  
 the tuning and twang of the fiddle is heard close out-  
 side the open window, and the daughter sings in a clear*

*cheerful voice. A little tittering is heard in the room,  
and the Vicar pauses discomfited.*

## I

O my heart ! what a coil is here !  
Laurie, why will ye count me dear !  
Laurie, Laurie, lad, make not wail,  
With a wiser lass ye 'll sure prevail,  
For ye sing like a woodland nightingale.  
And there 's no sense in it under the sun ;  
For of three that woo I can take but one,  
So what 's to be done—what 's to be done ?

And

There 's no sense in it under the sun.

## II

Hal, brave Hal, from your foreign parts  
Come home you 'll choose among kinder hearts.  
Forget, forget, you 're too good to hold  
A fancy 't were best should faint, grow cold,  
And fade like an August marigold ;  
For of three that woo I can take but one,  
And what 's to be done—what 's to be done ?  
There 's no sense in it under the sun.

And

Of three that woo I can take but one.

## III

Geordie, Geordie, I count you true,  
Though language sweet I have none for you.





## KISMET.



INTO the rock the road is cut full deep,  
At its low ledges village children play,  
From its high rifts fountains of leafage weep,  
And silvery birches sway.

The boldest climbers have its face forsworn,  
Sheer as a wall it doth all daring flout ;  
But benchlike at its base, and weather-worn,  
A narrow ledge leans out.

There do they set forth feasts in dishes rude  
Wrought of the rush—wild strawberries on the bed  
Left into August, apples brown and crude  
Cress from the cold well-head.

Shy gamesome girls, small daring imps of boys,  
But gentle, almost silent at their play—  
Their fledgling daws, for food, make far more noise  
Ranged on the ledge than they.



The children and the purple martins share  
    (Loveliest of birds) possession of the place ;  
They veer and dart cream-breasted round the fair  
    Faces with wild sweet grace.

Fresh haply from Palmyra desolate,  
    Palmyra pale in light and storyless—  
From perching in old Tadmor mate by mate  
    In the waste wilderness.

These know the world ; what do the children know ?  
    They know the woods, their groaning noises weird,  
They climb in trees that overhang the slow  
    Deep mill-stream, loved and feared.

Where shaken water-wheels go creak and clack,  
    List while a lorn thrush calls and almost speaks ;  
See willow-wrens with elderberries black  
    Staining their slender beaks.

They know full well how squirrels spend the day ;  
    They peeped when field-mice stole and stored the  
    seeds,  
And voles along their under-water way  
    Donned collars of bright beads.

Still from the deep-cut road they love to mark  
    Where set, as in a frame, the nearer shapes  
Rise out of hill and wood ; then long downs dark  
    As purple bloom on grapes.

But farms whereon the tall wheat musters gold,  
    High barley whitening, creases in bare hills  
Reed-feathered, castle-like brown churches old,  
    Nor churning water-mills,

Shall make ought seem so fair as that beyond—  
    Beyond the down, which draws their fealty ;  
Blow high, blow low, some hearts do aye respond,  
    The wind is from the sea.

Above the steep-cut steps as they did grow,  
    The children's cottage homes embowered are seen ;  
Were this a world unfallen, they scarce could show  
    More beauteous red and green.

Milk-white and vestal-chaste the hollyhock  
    Grows tall, clove, sweetgale nightly shed forth spice,  
Long woodbines leaning over scent the rock  
    With airs of Paradise.

Here comforted of pilot stars they lie  
    In charmèd dreams, but not of wold nor lea,  
Behold a ship ! her wide yards score the sky ;  
    She sails a steel-blue sea.

As turns the great amassment of the tide,  
    Drawn of the silver despot to her throne,  
So turn the destined souls, so far and wide  
    The strong deep claims its own.

Still the old tale, these dreaming islanders,  
Each with hot Sunderbunds a somewhat owns  
That calls, the grandsire's blood within them stirs  
Dutch Java guards his bones.

And these were orphan'd when a leak was sprung  
Far out from land when all the air was balm ;  
The shipmen saw their faces as they hung,  
And sank in the glassy calm.

These, in an orange-sloop their father plied,  
Deck-laden deep she sailed from Cadiz town,  
A black squall rose, she turned upon her side,  
Drank water and went down.

They too shall sail. High names of alien lands  
Are in the dream, great names their fathers knew ;  
Madras, the white surf rearing on her sands,  
E'en they shall breast it too.

See threads of scarlet down fell Roa creep,  
When moaning winds rend back her vapourous veil ;  
Wild Orinoco wedge-like split the deep,  
Raging forth passion-pale :

Then a blue berg at sunrise glittering, tall,  
Great as a town adrift come shining on  
With sharp spires, gemlike as the mystical  
Clear city of Saint John.

Still the old tale ; but they are children yet ;  
    O let their mothers have them while they may !  
Soon it shall work, the strange mysterious fret  
    That mars both toil and play.

The sea will claim its own ; and some shall mourn ;  
    They also, they, but yet will surely go ;  
So surely as the planet to its bourne,  
    The chamois to his snow.

‘ Father, dear father, bid us now God-speed ;  
    We cannot choose but sail, it thus befell.’  
‘ Mother, dear mother—’

    ‘ Nay, ’t is all decreed.  
Dear hearts, farewell, farewell !’





## DORA.



WAXING moon that, crescent yet,  
In all its silver beauty set,  
And rose no more in the lonesome night  
To shed full-orbed its longed-for light.

Then was it dark ; on wold and lea,  
In home, in heart, the hours were drear.  
Father and mother could no light see,  
And the hearts trembled and there was fear.  
—So on the mount, Christ's chosen three,  
Unware that glory it did shroud,  
Feared when they entered into the cloud.

She was the best part of love's fair  
Adornment, life's God-given care,  
As if He bade them guard His own,  
Who should be soon anear His throne.

Dutiful, happy, and who say  
When childhood smiles itself away,  
'More fair than morn shall prove the day.'  
Sweet souls so nigh to God that rest,  
How shall be bettering of your best !  
That promise heaven alone shall view,  
That hope can ne'er with us come true,  
That prophecy life hath not skill,  
No, nor time leave that it fulfil.  
There is but heaven, for childhood never  
Can yield the all it meant, for ever.  
Or is there earth, must wane to less  
What dawned so close by perfectness.

How guileless sweet by gift divine,  
How beautiful, dear child, was thine—  
Spared all their grief of thee bereaven,  
Winner, who had not greatly striven,  
Hurts of sin shall not thee soil,  
Carking care thy beauty spoil,  
So early blest, so young forgiven.

Among the meadows fresh to view,  
And in the woodland ways she grew,  
On either side a hand to hold,  
Nor the world's worst of evil knew,  
Nor rued its miseries manifold,  
Nor made discovery of its cold.

---

What more?—like one with morn content,  
Or of the morrow diffident,  
Unconscious, beautiful she stood,  
Calm, in young stainless maidenhood ;  
Then, with the last steps childhood trod,  
Took up her fifteen years to God.

Farewell, sweet hope, not long to last,  
All life is better for thy past.  
Farewell till love with sorrow meet,  
To learn that tears are obsolete.







## SPERANZA.

Her younger sister, that Speranza hight.

**L** ENGLAND puts on her purple, and pale, pale  
With too much light, the primrose doth  
but wait  
To meet the hyacinth ; then bower and dale  
Shall lose her and each fairy woodland mate.  
April forgets them, for their utmost sum  
Of gift was silent, and the birds are come.

The world is stirring, many voices blend,  
The English are at work in field and way ;  
All the good finches on their wives attend,  
And emmets their new towns lay out in clay ;  
Only the cuckoo-bird only doth say  
Her beautiful name, and float at large all day.

Everywhere ring sweet clamours, chirruping,  
Chirping, that comes before the grasshopper ;  
The wide woods, flurried with the pulse of spring,  
Shake out their wrinkled buds with tremor and stir ;  
Small noises, little cries, the ear receives  
Light as a rustling foot on last year's leaves.

All in deep dew the satisfied deep grass

Looking straight upward stars itself with white,  
 Like ships in heaven full-sailed do long clouds pass  
 Slowly o'er this great peace, and wide sweet light,  
 While through moist meads draws down yon rushy mere  
 Influent waters, sobbing, shining, clear.

Almost is rapture poignant ; somewhat ails

The heart and mocks the morning ; somewhat sighs,  
 And those sweet foreigners, the nightingales,  
 Made restless with their love, pay down its price,  
 Even the pain ; then all the story unfold  
 Over and over again—yet 't is not told.

The mystery of the world whose name is life

(One of the names of God) all-conquering wends  
 And works for aye with rest and cold at strife.  
 Its pedigree goes up to Him and ends.  
 For it the lucent heavens are clear o'erhead,  
 And all the meads are made its natal bed.

Dear is the light, and eye-sight ever sweet,

What see they all fair lower things that nurse,  
 No wonder, and no doubt? Truly their meat,  
 Their kind, their field, their foes ; man's eyes are more ;  
 Sight is man's having of the universe,  
 His pass to the majestic far shore.

But it is not enough, ah not enough  
 To look upon it and be held away,  
 And to be sure that, while we tread the rough,  
 Remote dull paths of this dull world, no ray  
 Shall pierce to us from the inner soul of things,  
 Nor voice thrill out from its deep master-strings.

‘To show the skies, and tether to the sod !  
 A daunting gift !’ we mourn in our long strife,  
 And God is more than all our thought of God ;  
 E’en life itself more than our thought of life,  
 And that is all we know—and it is noon,  
 Our little day will soon be done—how soon !

O let us to ourselves be dutiful :  
 We are not satisfied, we have wanted all,  
 Not alone beauty, but that Beautiful ;  
 A lifted veil, an answering mystical.  
 Ever men plead, and plain, admire, implore,  
 ‘ Why gavest Thou so much—and yet—not more ?

We are but let to look, and Hope is weighed.’  
 Yet, say the Indian words of sweet renown,  
 ‘ The doomèd tree withholdeth not her shade  
 From him that bears the axe to cut her down ;’  
 Is hope cut down, dead, doomèd, all is vain :  
 The third day dawns, she too has risen again

(For Faith is ours by gift, but Hope by right),  
 And walks among us whispering as of yore :  
 'Glory and grace are thrown thee with the light ;  
 Search, if not yet thou touch the mystic shore ;  
 Immanent beauty and good are nigh at hand,  
 For infants laugh and snowdrops bloom in the land.

Thou shalt have more anon.' What more? In sooth,  
 The mother of to-morrow is to-day,  
 And brings forth after her kind. There is no ruth  
 On the heart's sigh, that 'more' is hidden away,  
 And man's to-morrow yet shall pine and yearn ;  
 He shall surmise, and he shall not discern,

But list the lark, and want the rapturous cries  
 And passioning of morning stars that sing  
 Together, mark the meadow-orchis rise  
 And think it freckled after an angel's wing ;  
 Absent desire his land, and feel this, one  
 With the great drawing of the central sun.

But not to all such dower, for there be eyes  
 Are colour-blind, and souls are spirit-blind.  
 Those never saw the blush in sunset skies,  
 Nor the others caught a sense not made of words  
 As if were spirits about, that sailed the wind  
 And sank and settled on the boughs like birds.

Yet such for aye divided from us are  
As other galaxies that seem no more  
Than a little golden millet-seed afar.

Divided; swarming down some flat lee shore,  
Then risen, while all the air that takes no word  
Tingles, and trembles as with cries not heard.

For they can come no nearer. There is found  
No meeting point. We have pierced the lodging-place  
Of stars that cluster'd with their peers lie bound,  
Embedded thick, sunk in the seas of space,  
Fortunate orbs that know not night, for all  
Are suns;—but we have never heard that call,

Nor learned it in our world, our citadel  
With outworks of a Power about it traced;  
Nor why we needs must sin who would do well,  
Nor why the want of love, nor why its waste,  
Nor how by dying of One should all be sped,  
Nor where, O Lord, Thou hast laid up our dead.

But Hope is ours by right, and Faith by gift.  
Though Time be as a moon upon the wane  
Who walk with Faith far up the azure lift  
Oft hear her talk of lights to wax again.  
'If man be lost,' she cries, 'in this vast sea  
Of being,—lost—he would be lost with Thee

Who for his sake once, as he hears, lost all.

For Thou wilt find him at the end of the days :  
Then shall the flocking souls that thicker fall  
Than snowflakes on the everlasting ways  
Be counted, gathered, claimed.—Will it be long?  
Earth has begun already her swan-song.

Who, even that might, would dwell for ever pent  
In this fair frame that doth the spirit inhearse,  
Nor at the last grow weary and content,  
Die, and break forth into the universe,  
And yet man would not all things—all—were new.’  
Then saith the other, that one robed in blue :

‘What if with subtle change God touch their eyes  
When He awakes them,—not far off, but here  
In a new earth, this : not in any wise  
Strange, but more homely sweet, more heavenly dear,  
Or if He roll away, as clouds disperse  
Somewhat, and lo, that other universe.

O how ’t were sweet new waked in some good hour,  
Long time to sit on a hillside green and high,  
There like a honeybee domed in a flower  
To feed unneath the azure bell o’ the sky,  
Feed in the midmost home and fount of light  
Sown thick with stars at noonday as by night

To watch the flying faultless ones wheel down,  
    Alight, and run along some ridgèd peak,  
Their feet adust from orbs of old renown,  
    Procyon or Mazzaroth, haply ;—when they speak  
Other-world errands wondrous, all discern  
That would be strange, there would be much to learn.

Ay, and it would be sweet to share unblamed  
    Love's shining truths that tell themselves in tears,  
Or to confess and be no more ashamed  
    The wrongs that none can right through earthly years;  
And seldom laugh, because the tenderness  
Calm, perfect, would be more than joy—would bless.

I tell you it were sweet to have enough,  
    And be enough. Among the souls forgiven  
In presence of all worlds, without rebuff  
    To move, and feel the excellent safety leaven  
With peace that awe must loss and the grave survive—  
But palpitating moons that are alive

Nor shining fogs swept up together afar,  
    Vast as a thought of God, in the firmament ;  
No, and to dart as light from star to star  
    Would not long time man's yearning soul content :  
Albeit were no more ships and no more sea,  
He would desire his new earth presently.



Leisure to learn it. Peoples would be here ;  
They would come on in troops, and take at will  
The forms, the faces they did use to wear  
With life's first splendours—raiment rich with skill  
Of broidery, carved adornments, crowns of gold ;  
Still would be sweet to them the life of old.

Then might be gatherings under golden shade,  
Where dust of water drifts from some sheer fall,  
Cooling day's ardour. There be utterance made  
Of comforted love, dear freedom after thrall,  
Large longings of the Seer, through earthly years  
An everlasting burden, but no tears.

Egypt's adopted child might tell of lore  
They taught him underground in shrines all dim,  
And of the live tame reptile gods that wore  
Gold anklets on their feet. And after him,  
With fairest eyes e'er met of mortal ken,  
Glorious, forgiven, might speak the mother of men,

Talk of her apples gather'd by the marge  
Of lapsing Gihon. "Thus one spoke, I stood,  
I ate." Or next the mariner-saint enlarge  
Right quaintly on his ark of gopher wood  
To wandering men through high grass meads that ran  
Or sailed the sea Mediterranean.

It might be common—earth afforested  
 Newly, to follow her great ones to the sun,  
 When from transcendent aisles of gloom they sped  
 Some work august (there would be work) now done.  
 And list, and their high matters strive to scan  
 The seekers after God, and lovers of man,

Sitting together in amity on a hill,  
 The Saint of Visions from Greek Patmos come—  
 Aurelius, lordly, calm-eyed, as of will  
 Austere, yet having rue on lost, lost Rome,  
 And with them one who drank a fateful bowl,  
 And to the unknown God trusted his soul.

The mitred Cranmer pitied even there  
 (But could it be?) for that false hand which signed  
 O, all pathetic—no. But it might bear  
 To soothe him marks of fire—and gladsome kind  
 The man, as all of joy him well beseemed  
 Who “lightéd on a certain place and dreamed.”

And fair with the meaning of life their divine brows,  
 The daughters of well-doing famed in song ;  
 But what ! could old-world love for child, for spouse,  
 For land, content through lapsing eons long ?  
 Oh for a watchword strong to bridge the deep  
 And satisfy of fulness after sleep.

What know we? Whispers fall, "*And the last first,  
And the first last.*" The child before the king?  
The slave before that man a master erst?  
The woman before her lord? Shall glory fling  
The rolls aside—time raze out triumphs past?  
They sigh, "*And the last first, and the first last.*"

Answers that other, 'Lady, sister, friend,  
It is enough, for I have worshipped Life;  
With Him that is the Life man's life shall blend,  
E'en now the sacred heavens do help his strife,  
There do they knead his bread and mix his cup,  
And all the stars have leave to bear him up.

Yet must he sink and fall away to a sleep,  
As did his Lord, His Life his worshippèd  
Religion, Life. The silence may be deep,  
Life listening, watching, waiting by His dead,  
Till at the end of days they wake full fain  
Because their King, the Life, doth love and reign.

I know the King shall come to that new earth,  
And His feet stand again as once they stood,  
In His Man's eyes will shine Time's end and worth  
The chiefest beauty and the chiefest good,  
And all shall have the all and in it bide,  
And every soul of man be satisfied.'



## THE BEGINNING.

**T**HEY tell strange things of the primeval earth,  
But things that be are never strange to those  
Among them. And we know what it was like,  
Many are sure they walked in it ; the proof  
This, the all gracious, all admirèd gift  
Called life, called world, called thought, was all as one,  
Nor yet divided more than that old earth  
Among the tribes. Self was not fully come—  
Self was asleep, embedded in the whole.

I too dwelt once in a primeval world,  
Such as they tell of ; all things wonderful,  
Voices, ay visions, people grand and tall  
Thronged in it, but their talk was overhead  
And bore scant meaning, that one wanted not  
Whose thought was sight as yet unbound of words,  
This kingdom of heaven having entered through  
Being a little child.

Such as can see,  
 Why should they doubt? The childhood of a race,  
 The childhood of a soul, hath neither doubt  
 Nor fear. Where all is super-natural  
 The guileless heart doth feed on it, no more  
 Afraid than angels are of heaven.

Who saith

Another life, the next one shall not have  
 Another childhood growing gently thus,  
 Able to bear the poignant sweetness, take  
 The rich long awful measure of its peace,  
 Endure the presences sublime?

I saw

Once in that earth primeval, once—a face,  
 A little face that yet I dream upon.’

‘Of this world was it?’

‘Not of this world—no,

In the beginning—for methinks it was  
 In the beginning, but an if you ask  
 How long ago, time was not then, nor date  
 For marking. It was always long ago,  
 E’en from the first recalling of it, long  
 And long ago.

And I could walk, and went,  
 Led by the hand through a long mead at morn,  
 Bathed in a ravishing excess of light.  
 It throbbed, and as it were fresh fallen from heaven,

Sank deep into the meadow grass. The sun  
 Gave every blade a bright and a dark side,  
 Glitter'd on buttercups that topped them, slipped  
 To soft red puffs, by some called holy-hay.

The wide oaks in their early green stood still  
 And took delight in it. Brown specks that made  
 Very sweet noises quivered in the blue ;  
 Then they came down and ran along the brink  
 Of a long pool, and they were birds.

The pool

Pranked at the edges with pale peppermint,  
 A rare amassment of veined cuckoo flowers  
 And flags blue-green was lying below. This all  
 Was sight, it condescended not to words  
 Till memory kissed the charmèd dream.

The mead

Hollowing and heaving, in the hollows fair  
 With dropping roses fell away to it,  
 A strange sweet place ; upon its further side  
 Some people gently walking took their way  
 Up to a wood beyond ; and also bells  
 Sang, floated in the air, hummed—what you will.'

'Then it was Sunday?'

'Sunday was not yet ;

It was a holiday, for all the days  
 Were holy. It was not our day of rest

(The earth for all her rolling asks not rest,  
For she was never weary).

It was sweet,  
Full of dear leisure and perennial peace,  
As very old days when life went easily,  
Before mankind had lost the wise, the good  
Habit of being happy.

For the pool  
A beauteous place it was as might be seen,  
That led one down to other meads, and had  
Clouds and another sky. I thought to go  
Deep down in it, and walk that steep clear slope.

Then she who led me reached the brink, her foot  
Staying to talk with one who met her there.  
Here were fresh marvels, sailing things whose vans  
Floated them on above the flowering flags.  
We moved a little onward, paused again,  
And here there was a break in these, and here  
There came the vision ; for I stooped to gaze  
So far as my small height would let me—gaze  
Into that pool to see the fishes dart,  
And in a moment from her under hills  
Came forth a little child who lived down there,  
Looked up at me and smiled. We could not talk,  
But looked and loved each other. I a hand  
Held out to her, so she to me, but ah,  
She would not come. Her home, her little bed,



Was doubtless under that soft shining thing  
The water, and she wanted not to run  
Among red sorrel spires, and fill her hand  
In the dry warmèd grass with cowslip buds.

Awhile our feeding hearts all satisfied,  
Took in the blue of one another's eyes,  
Two dimpled creatures, rose-lipped innocent.  
But when we fain had kissed—O ! the end came,  
For snatched aloft, held in the nurse's arms,  
She parting with her lover I was borne  
Far from that little child.

And no one knew  
She lived down there, but only I ; and none  
Sought for her, but I yearned for her and left  
Part of myself behind, as the lambs leave  
Their wool upon a thorn.'

' And was she seen  
Never again, nor known for what she was ?'

' Never again, for we did leave anon  
The pasture and the pool. I know not where  
They lie, and sleep a heaven on earth, but know  
From thenceforth yearnings for a lost delight;  
On certain days I dream about her still.'



## IN THE NURSERY.

‘ **W**HERE do you go, Bob, when you ’re fast asleep?’

‘Where? O well, once I went into a deep Mine, father told of, and a cross man said He ’d make me help to dig, and eat black bread. I saw the Queen once, in her room, quite near. She said, “You rude boy, Bob, how came you here?”’

‘Was it like mother’s boudoir?’

‘Grander far,  
Gold chairs and things—all over diamonds—Ah!’

‘You ’re sure it was the Queen?’

‘Of course, a crown  
Was on her, and a spangly purple gown.’

‘I went to heaven last night.’

‘O Lily, no,  
How could you?’

‘Yes I did, they told me so,  
And my best doll, my favourite, with the blue  
Frock, Jasmine, I took her to heaven too.’

‘What was it like?’

‘A kind of—I can’t tell—  
A sort of orchard place in a long dell,  
With trees all over flowers. And there were birds  
Who could do talking, say soft pretty words ;  
They let me stroke them, and I showed it all  
To Jasmine. And I heard a blue dove call,  
“Child, this is heaven.” I was not frightened when  
It spoke, I said “Where are the angels then?”’

‘Well.’

‘So it said, “Look up and you shall see.”  
There were two angels sitting in the tree,  
As tall as mother ; they had long gold hair.  
They let drop down the fruit they gather’d there  
And little angels came for it—so sweet  
Here they were beggar children in the street,  
And the dove said they had the prettiest things,  
And wore their best frocks every day.’

‘And wings,  
Had they no wings?’

‘O yes, and lined with white  
Like swallow wings, so soft—so very light  
Fluttering about.’

‘Well.’

‘Well, I did not stay,  
So that was all.’

‘They made you go away?’

‘I did not go—but—I was gone.’

‘I know.’

‘But it’s a pity, Bob, we never go  
Together.’

‘Yes, and have no dreams to tell,  
But the next day both know it all quite well.’

‘And, Bob, if I could dream you came with me  
You would be there perhaps.’

‘Perhaps—we’ll see.’





## THE AUSTRALIAN BELL-BIRD.



OLL—

Toll.' 'The bell-bird sounding far  
away,  
Hid in a myall grove.' He raised his head,  
The bush glowed scarlet in descending day,  
A masterless wild country—and he said,  
My father ('Toll.') 'Full oft by her to stray,  
As if a spirit called, have I been led ;  
Oft seem's she as an echo in my soul  
( 'Toll.' ) from my native towers by Avon ( 'Toll' ).

( 'Toll.' ) Oft as in a dream I see full fain  
The bell-tower beautiful that I love well,  
A seemly cluster with her churches twain.  
I hear adown the river faint and swell  
And lift upon the air that sound again,  
It is, it is—how sweet no tongue can tell,  
For all the world-wide breadth of shining foam,  
The bells of Evesham chiming " Home, sweet home."

The mind hath mastery thus – it can defy  
 The sense, and make all one as it DID HEAR—  
 Nay, I mean more ; the wraiths of sound gone by  
 Rise ; they are present 'neath this dome all clear.  
 ONE, sounds the bird—a pause—then doth supply  
 Some ghost of chimes the void expectant ear ;  
 Do they ring bells in heaven ? The learnedest soul  
 Shall not resolve me such a question. ('Toll.')

('Toll.') Say I am a boy, and fishing stand  
 By Avon ('Toll.') on line and rod intent,  
 How glitters deep in dew the meadow land—  
 What, dost thou flit, thy ministry all spent,  
 Not many days we hail such visits bland,  
 Why steal so soon the rare enravishment ?  
 Ay gone ! the soft deceptive echoes roll  
 Away, and faint into remoteness.' ('Toll.')

While thus he spoke the doom'd sun touched his bed,  
 In scarlet all the palpitating air  
 Still loyal waited on. He dipped his head,  
 Then all was over, and the dark was there ;  
 And northward, lo ! a star, one likewise red  
 But lurid, starts from out her day-long lair.  
 Her fellows trail behind ; she bears her part,  
 The balefullest star that shines, the Scorpion's heart.

Or thus of old men feigned, and then did fear,  
Then straight crowd forth the great ones of the sky  
In flashing flame at strife to reach more near.  
The little children of Infinity,  
They next look down as to report them ' Here,'  
From deeps all thoughts despair and heights past high  
Speeding, not sped, no rest, no goal, no shore,  
Still to rush on till time shall be no more.

' Loved vale of Evesham, 't is a long farewell  
Not laden orchards nor their April snow  
These eyes shall light upon again ; the swell  
And whisper of thy storied river know,  
Nor climb the hill where great de Montfort fell  
In a good cause hundreds of years ago ;  
So fall'n, elect to live till life's ally,  
The river of recorded deeds, runs dry.

This land is very well, this air,' saith he,  
' Is very well, but we want echoes here.  
Man's past to feed the air and move the sea ;  
Ages of toil make English furrows dear,  
Enriched by blood shed for his liberty,  
Sacred by love's first sigh and life's last fear,  
We come of a good nest, for it shall yearn  
Poor birds of passage, but may not return,



Spread younger wings, and beat the winds afar.

There sing more poets in that one small isle  
Than all isles else can show—of such you are ;

Remote things come to you unsought erewhile,  
Near things a long way round as by a star.

Wild dreams !' He laughed, ' A sage right infantile ;  
With sacred fear behold life's waste deplored,  
Undaunted by the leisure of the Lord.

Ay go, the island dream with eyes make good,  
Where Freedom rose, a lodestar to your race ;

And Hope that leaning on her anchor stood  
Did smile it to her feet : a right small place.

Call her a mother, high such motherhood,

Home in her name and duty in her face ;  
Call her a ship, her wide arms rake the clouds,  
And every wind of God pipes in her shrouds.

Ay, all the more go you. But some have cried

" The ship is breaking up ;" they watch amazed  
While urged toward the rocks by some that guide ;

Bad steering, reckless steering, she all dazed  
Tempteth her doom ; yet this have none denied

Ships men have wrecked and palaces have razed.

But never was it known beneath the sun,

They of such wreckage built a goodlier one.

God help old England an't be thus, nor less  
 God help the world.' Therewith my mother spake,  
 'Perhaps He will ! By time, by faithlessness,  
 By the world's want long in the dark awake,  
 I think He must be almost due : the stress  
 Of the great tide of life, sharp misery's ache,  
 In a recluseness of the soul we rue  
 Far off, but yet—He must be almost due.

God manifest again, the coming King.'  
 Then said my father, ' I beheld erewhile,  
 Sitting up dog-like to the sunrising,  
 The giant doll in ruins by the Nile,  
 With hints of red that yet to it doth cling,  
 Fell, battered, and bewigged its cheeks were vile,  
 A body of evil with its angel fled,  
 Whom and his fellow fiends men worshippèd.

The gods die not, long shrouded on their biers,  
 Somewhere they live, and live in memory yet ;  
 Were not the Israelites for forty years  
 Hid from them in the desert to forget—  
 Did they forget ? no more than their last feres  
 Sons of to-day with faces southward set,  
 Who dig for buried lore long ages fled,  
 And sift for it the sand and search the dead,

Brown Egypt gave not one great poet birth,  
But man was better than his gods, with lays  
He soothed them restless, and they zoned the earth,  
And crossed the sea ; there drank immortal praise ;  
Then from his own best self with glory and worth  
And beauty dowered he them for dateless days.  
Ever " their sound goes forth " from shore to shore,  
When was there known an hour that they lived more ?

Because they are beloved and not believed,  
Admired not feared, they draw men to their feet ;  
All once, rejected, nothing now, received  
Where once found wanting, now the most complete ;  
Man knows to-day, though manhood stand achieved,  
His cradle-rockers made a rustling sweet ;  
That king reigns longest which did lose his crown,  
Stars that by poets shine are stars gone down.

Still drawn obedient to an unseen hand,  
From purer heights comes down the yearning west,  
Like to that eagle in the morning land,  
That swooping on her predatory quest,  
Did from the altar steal a smouldering brand,  
The which she bearing home it burned her nest,  
And her wide pinions of their plumes bereaven,  
Spoiled for glad spiring up the steeps of heaven.

' I say the gods live, and that reign abhor,  
 And will the nations it should dawn? Will they  
 Who ride upon the perilous edge of war?  
 Will such as delve for gold in this our day?  
 Neither the world will, nor the age will, nor  
 The soul—and what, it cometh now? Nay, nay,  
 The weighty sphere, unready for release,  
 Rolls far in front of that o'ermastering peace.

Wait and desire it ; life waits not, free there  
 To good, to evil, thy right perilous—  
 All shall be fair, and yet it is not fair.  
 I thank my God He takes th' advantage thus ;  
 He doth not greatly hide, but still declare  
 Which side He is on and which He loves, to us,  
 While life impartial aid to both doth lend,  
 And heed not which the choice nor what the end.

Among the few upright, O to be found,  
 And ever search the nobler path, my son,  
 Nor say "'t is sweet to find me common ground  
 Too high, too good, shall leave the hours alone"—  
 Nay, though but one stood on the height renowned,  
 Deny not hope or will, to be that one.  
 Is it the many fall'n shall lift the land,  
 The race, the age !—Nay, 't is the few that stand:

While in the lamplight hearkening I sat mute,  
Methought 'how soon this fire must needs burn out'  
Among the passion flowers and passion fruit  
That from the wide verandah hung, misdoubt  
Was mine. 'And wherefore made I thus long suit  
To leave this old white head? His words devout,  
His blessing not to hear who loves me so—  
He that is old, right old—I will not go.'

But ere the dawn their counsels wrought with me,  
And I went forth; alas that I so went  
Under the great gum-forest canopy,  
The light on every silken filament  
Of every flower, a quivering ecstasy  
Of perfect paleness made it; sunbeams sent  
Up to the leaves with sword-like flash endued  
Each turn of that grey drooping multitude.

I sought to look as in the light of one  
Returned. 'Will this be strange to me that day?  
Flocks of green parrots clamorous in the sun  
Tearing out milky maize—stiff cacti grey  
As old men's beards—here stony ranges lone,  
There dust of mighty flocks upon their way  
To water, cloudlike on the bush afar,  
Like smoke that hangs where old-world cities are.

Is it not made man's last endowment here  
 To find a beauty in the wilderness ;  
 Feel the lorn moor above his pastures dear,  
 Mountains that may not house and will not bless  
 To draw him even to death ? He must insphere  
 His spirit in the open, so doth less  
 Desire his feres, and more that unvex'd wold  
 Those fine afforested hills, his dower of old.

But shall we lose again that new-found sense  
 Which sees the earth less for our tillage fair ?  
 Oh, let her speak with her best eloquence  
 To me, but not her first and her right rare  
 Can equal what I may not take from hence.  
 The gems are left : it is not otherwhere  
 The wild Nepèan cleaves her matchless way,  
 Nor Sydney harbour shall outdo the day.

Adding to day this—that she lighteth it.'

But I beheld again, and as must be  
 With a world-record by a spirit writ,  
 It was more beautiful than memory,  
 Than hope was more complete.

Tall brigs did sit  
 Each in her berth the pure flood placidly,  
 Their topsails drooping 'neath the vast blue dome  
 Listlessly waiting to be sheeted home.

And the great ships with pulse-like throbbing clear,  
Majestical of mien did take their way  
Like living creatures from some grander sphere,  
That having boarded ours thought good to stay,  
Albeit enslaved. They most divided here  
From God's great art and all his works in clay,  
In that their beauty lacks, though fair it shows  
That divine waste of beauty only He bestows.

The day was young, scarce out the harbour lights  
That morn I sailed : low sun-rays tremulous  
On golden loops sped outward. Yachts in flights  
Flutter'd the water air-like clear, while thus  
It crept for shade among brown rocky bights  
With cassia crowned and palms diaphanous,  
And boughs ripe fruitage dropping fitfully,  
That on the shining ebb went out to sea.

'Home,' saith the man self-banishèd, 'my son  
Shall now go home.' Therewith he sendeth him  
Abroad, and knows it not, but thence is won,  
Rescued, the son's true home. His mind doth limn  
Beautiful pictures of it, there is none  
So dear, a new thought shines erewhile but dim,  
'That was my home, a land past all compare,  
Life, and the poetry of life, are there.



But no such thought drew near to me that day ;  
 All the new worlds flock forth to greet the old,  
 All the young souls bow down to own its sway,  
 Enamoured of strange richness manifold ;  
 Not to be stored, albeit they seek for aye,  
 Besieging it for its own life to hold,  
 E'en as Al Mamoun fain for treasures hid,  
 Stormed with an host th' inviolate pyramid,

And went back foiled but wise to walled Bagdad.  
 So I, so all. The treasure sought not found,  
 But some divine tears found to superadd  
 Themselves to a long story. The great round  
 Of yesterdays, their pathos sweet as sad,  
 Found to be only as to-day, close bound  
 With us, we hope some good thing yet to know,  
 But God is not in haste, while the lambs grow

The Shepherd leadeth softly. It is great  
 The journey, and the flock forgets at last  
 (Earth ever working to obliterate  
 The landmarks) when it halted, where it passed ;  
 And words confuse, and time doth ruinate,  
 And memory fail to hold a theme so vast ;  
 There is request for light, but the flock feeds,  
 And slowly ever on the Shepherd leads.

'Home,' quoth my father, and a glassy sea  
    Made for the stars a mirror of its breast,  
While southing, pennon-like, in bravery  
    Of long-drawn gold they trembled to their rest.  
Strange the first night and morn, when Destiny  
    Spread out to float on, all the mind oppressed ;  
Strange on their outer roof to speed forth thus,  
And know th' uncouth sea-beasts stared up at us.

But yet more strange the nights of falling rain,  
    That splashed without—a sea-coal fire within ;  
Life's old things gone astern, the mind's disdain,  
    For murmurous London makes soft rhythmic din.  
All courtier thoughts that wait on words would fain  
    Express that sound. 'The words are not to win  
Till poet made, but mighty, yet so mild  
Shall be as cooing of a cradle-child

Sensation like a piercing arrow flies,  
    Daily out-going thought. This Adamhood,  
This weltering river of mankind that hies  
    Adown the street ; it cannot be withstood.  
The richest mundane miles not otherwise  
    Than by a symbol keep possession good,  
Mere symbol of division, and men hold  
The clear pane sacred, the unminted gold

And wild outpouring of all wealth not less.

Why this? A million strong the multitude,  
And safe, far safer than our wilderness

The walls ; for them it daunts with right at feud,  
Itself declares for law ; yet sore the stress

On steeps of life : what power to ban and bless ;  
Saintly denial, waste inglorious,  
Desperate want, and riches fabulous.

Of souls what beautiful embodiment

For some ; for some what homely housing writ ;  
What keen-eyed men who beggared of content

Eat bread well earned as they had stolen it ;  
What flutterers after joy that forward went,

And left them in the rear unqueened, unfit  
For joy, with light that faints in strugglings drear  
Of all things good the most awanting here.

Some in the welter of this surging tide

Move like the mystic lamps, the Spirits Seven,  
Their burning love runs kindling far and wide,

That fire they needed not to steal from heaven,  
'T was a free gift flung down with them to bide,

And be a comfort for the hearts bereaven,  
A warmth, a glow, to make the failing store  
And parsimony of emotion more.

What glorious dreams in that find harbourage,  
The phantom of a crime stalks this beside,  
And those might well have writ on some past page,  
In such an hour, of such a year, we—died,  
Put out our souls, took the mean way, false wage,  
Course cowardly ; and if we be denied  
The life once loved, we cannot always rue  
The loss ; let be : what vails so sore ado ?

And faces pass of such as give consent  
To live because 't is not worth while to die ;  
This never knew the awful trembling  
When some great fear sprang forward suddenly,  
Its other name being hope—and there forthwent  
As both confronted him a rueful cry  
From the heart's core, one urging him to dare,  
' Now ! now ! Leap now.' The other, 'Stand, forbear.'

A nation reared in brick, how shall this be ?  
Nor by excess of life death overtake.  
To die in brick of brick her destiny,  
And as the hamadryad eats the snake  
His wife, and then the snake his son, so she.  
Air not enough, " though everyone doth take  
A little,' water scant, a plague of gold,  
Light out of date—a multitude born old,

And then a three-day siege might be the end ;  
E'en now the rays get muddied struggling down  
Through heaven's vasty lofts, and still extend  
The miles of brick and none forbid, and none  
Forbode ; a great world-wonder that doth send  
High fame abroad, and fear no setting sun,  
But helpless she through wealth that flouts the day  
And through her little children, even as they.

But forth of London, and all visions dear  
To eastern poets of a watered land  
Are made the commonplace of nature here,  
Sweet rivers always full, and always bland.  
Beautiful, beautiful ! What runlets clear  
Twinkle among the grass. On every hand  
Fall in the common talk from lips around  
The old names of old towns and famous ground.

It is not likeness only charms the sense,  
Not difference only sets the mind aglow,  
It is the likeness in the difference,  
Familiar language spoken on the snow,  
To have the Perfect in the Present tense,  
To hear the ploughboy whistling, and to know,  
It smacks of the wild bush, that tune—'T is ours,  
And look ! the bank is pale with primrose flowers,

What veils of tender mist make soft the lea,  
What bloom of air the height ; no veils confer  
On warring thought or softness or degree  
Or rest. Still falling, conquering, strife and stir.  
For this religion pays indemnity.  
She pays her enemies for conquering her,  
And then her friends ; while ever, and in vain  
Lots for a seamless coat are cast again

Whose it shall be ; unless it shall endow  
Thousands of thousands it can fall to none,  
But faith and hope are not so simple now,  
As in the year of our redemption—One.  
The pencil of pure light must disallow  
Its name and scattering, many hues put on,  
And faith and hope low in the valley fell,  
There it is well with them, 't is very well.

The land is full of vision, voices call.  
Can spirits cast a shadow? Ay, I trow  
Past is not done, and over is not all,  
Opinion dies to live and wanes to grow,  
The gossamer of thought doth filmlike fall,  
On fallows after dawn make shimmering show,  
And with old arrow-heads, her earliest prize,  
Mix learning's latest guess and last surmise,

There heard I pipes of fame, saw wrens 'about  
That time when kings go forth to battle' dart,  
Full valorous atoms pierced with song, and stout  
To dare, and down yclad ; I shared the smart  
Of grievèd cushats, bloom of love, devout  
Beyond man's thought of it. Old song my heart  
Rejoiced, but O mine own forelders' ways  
To look on, and their fashions of past days.

The ponderous craft of arms I craved to see,  
Knights, burghers, filtering through those gates ajar,  
Their age of serfdom with my spirit free ;  
We cannot all have wisdom ; some there are  
Believe a star doth rule their destiny,  
And yet they think to overreach the star,  
For thought can weld together things apart,  
And contraries find meeting in the heart.

In the deep dust at Suez without sound  
I saw the Arab children walk at eve,  
Their dark untroubled eyes upon the ground,  
A part of Time's grave quiet. I receive  
Since then a sense, as nature might have found  
Love kin to man's that with the past doth grieve :  
And lets on waste and dust of ages fall  
Her tender silences that mean it all,



We have it of her, with her ; it were ill  
For men, if thought were widowed of the world,  
Or the world beggared of her sons, for still  
A crownèd sphere with many gems impearled  
She rolls because of them. We lend her will  
And she yields love. The past shall not be hurled  
In the abhorrèd limbo while the twain,  
Mother and son, hold partnership and reign.

She hangs out omens, and doth burdens dree.  
Is she in league with heaven? That knows but One.  
For man is not, and yet his work we see  
Full of unconscious omen darkly done.  
I saw the ring-stone wrought at Avebury  
To frame the face of the midwinter sun,  
Good luck that hour they thought from him forth smiled,  
At midwinter the Sun did rise—the Child.

Still would the world divine though man forbore,  
And what is beauty but an omen?—what  
But life's deep divination cast before,  
Omen of coming love? Hard were man's lot,  
With love and toil together at his door,  
But all-convincing eyes hath beauty got ;  
His love is beautiful, and he shall sue.  
Toil for her sake is sweet, the omen true.

Love, love, and come it must, then life is found  
    Beforehand that was whole and fronting care,  
A torn and broken half in durance bound  
    That mourns and makes request for its right fair  
Remainder, with forlorn eyes cast around  
    To search for what is lost, that unaware  
With not an hour's forebodement makes the day  
From henceforth less or more for ever and aye.

Her name— my love's—I knew it not ; who says  
    Of vagrant doubt for such a cause that stirs  
His fancy shall not pay arrearages  
    To all sweet names that might perhaps be hers ?  
The doubts of love are powers. His heart obeys,  
    The world is in them, still to love defers,  
Will play with him for love, but when 't begins  
The play is high, and the world always wins.

For 't is the maiden's world, and his no more.  
    Now thus it was : with new found kin flew by  
The temperate summer ; every wheatfield wore  
    Its gold, from house to house in ardency  
Of heart for what they showed I westward bore—  
    My mother's land, her native hills drew nigh ;  
I was—how green, how good old earth can be—  
Beholden to that land for teaching me,

And parted from my fellows, and went on  
To feel the spiritual sadness spread  
Adown long pastoral hollows. And anon  
Did words recur in far remoteness said :  
' See the deep vale ere dews are dried and gone,  
Where my so happy life in peace I led,  
And the great shadow of the Beacon lies—  
See little Ledbury trending up the rise,

With peakèd houses and high market hall—  
An oak each pillar—reared in the old days.'  
And here was little Ledbury, quaint withal,  
The forest felled, her lair and sheltering place  
She long time left in age pathological.

' Great oaks ' methought, as I drew near to gaze,  
' Were but of small account when these came down,  
Drawn rough-hewn in to serve the tree-girt town.

And thus and thus of it will question be  
The other side the world.' I paused awhile  
To mark. The old hall standeth utterly  
Without or floor or side, a comely pile,  
A house on pillars, and by destiny  
Drawn under its deep roof I saw a file  
Of children slowly through their way make good,  
And lifted up mine eyes—and there—SHE STOOD.

She was so stately that her youthful grace  
Drew out, it seemed, my soul into the air,  
Astonished out of breathing by her face  
So fain to nest itself in nut-brown hair  
Lying loose about her throat. But that old place  
Proved sacred, she just fully grown too fair  
For such a thought. The dimples that she had !  
She was so truly sweet that it was sad.

I was all hers. That moment gave her power—  
And whom, nay what she was, I scarce might know,  
But felt I had been born for that good hour.  
The perfect creature did not move, but so  
As if ordained to claim all grace for dower,  
She leaned against the pillar, and below  
Three almost babes, her care, she watched the while  
With downcast lashes and a musing smile.

I had been 'ware without a rustic treat,  
Waggon's bedecked with greenery stood anigh,  
A swarm of children in the cheerful street  
With girls to marshal them ; but all went by  
And none I noted save this only sweet :  
Too young her charge more venturous sport to try,  
With whirling baubles still they played content,  
And softly rose their lisping babblement.

‘O what a pause ! to be so near, to mark  
The locket rise and sink upon her breast ;  
The shadow of the lashes lieth dark  
Upon her cheek. O fleeting time, O rest !  
A slant ray finds the gold, and with a spark  
And flash it answers, now shall be the best.  
Her eyes she raises, sets their light on mine,  
They do not flash nor sparkle—no—but shine.’

As I for very hopelessness made bold  
Did off my hat ere time there was for thought,  
She with a gracious sweetness, calm, not cold,  
Acknowledged me, but brought my chance to nought.  
‘This vale of imperfection doth not hold  
A lovelier bud among its loveliest wrought !  
She turns,’ methought ‘O do not quite forget  
To me remains for ever—that we met.’

And straightway I went forth, I could no less,  
Another light unwot of fall’n on me,  
And rare elation and high happiness ;  
Some mighty power set hands of mastery  
Among my heartstrings, and they did confess  
With wild throbs inly sweet, that minstrelsy  
A nightingale might dream so rich a strain,  
And pine to change her song for sleep again.

The harp thrilled ever : O with what a round  
And series of rich pangs fled forth each note  
Oracular, that I had found, had found  
(Head waters of old Nile held less remote)  
Golden Dorado, dearest, most renowned ;  
But when as 't were a sigh did overflow,  
Shaping 'how long, not long shall this endure,  
*Au jour le jour*' methought, '*Au jour le jour*.'

The minutes of that hour my heart knew well  
Were like the fabled pint of golden grain,  
Each to be counted, paid for, till one fell,  
Grew, shot up to another world amain,  
And he who dropped might climb it, there to dwell.  
I too, I clomb another world full fain,  
But was she there ? O what would be the end,  
Might she nor there appear, nor I descend ?

All graceful as a palm the maiden stood ;  
Men say the palm of palms in tropic Isles  
Doth languish in her deep primeval wood,  
And want the voice of man, his home, his smiles,  
Nor flourish but in his dear neighbourhood ;  
She too shall want a voice that reconciles,  
A smile that charms—how sweet, would heaven so please—  
To plant her at my door over far seas.

I paced without, nor ever liege in truth

His sovran lady watched with more grave eyes  
Of reverence, and she nothing ware forsooth,

Did standing charm the soul with new surprise,  
Moving flow on a dimpled dream of youth.

Look! look! a sunbeam on her. Ay, but lies  
The shade more sweetly now she passeth through  
To join her fellow maids returned anew.

I saw (myself to bide unmarked intent)

Their youthful ease and pretty airs sedate,  
They are so good, they are so innocent,

Those Islanders, they learn their part so late,  
Of life's demand right careless, dwell content

Till the first love's first kiss shall consecrate  
Their future to a world that can but be  
By their sweet martyrdom and ministry.

Most happy of God's creatures. Afterward

More than all women married thou wilt be,  
E'en to the soul. One glance desired afford,

More than knight's service might'st thou ask of me.  
Not any chance is mine, not the best word,

No, nor the salt of life withouten thee.

Must this all end, is my day so soon o'er?

Untroubled violet eyes, look once,—once more.



No, not a glance : the low sun lay and burned,  
 Now din of drum and cry of fife withal,  
 Blithe teachers mustering frolic swarms returned,  
 And new-world ways in that old market hall,  
 Sweet girls, fair women, how my whole heart yearned  
 Her to draw near who made my festival.  
 With others closing round, time speeding on,  
 How soon she would be gone, she would be gone !

Ay, but I thought to track the rustic wains,  
 Their goal desired to note, but not anigh,  
 They creaking down long hop ycrested lanes  
 'Neath the abiding flush of that north sky.  
 I ran, my horse I fetched, but fate ordains  
 Love shall breed laughter when th' unloving spy.  
 As I drew rein to watch the gathered crowd,  
 With sudden mirth an old wife laughed aloud.

Her cheeks like winter apples red of hue,  
 Her glance aside. To whom her speech—to me ?  
 'I know the thing you go about to do—  
 The lady—' 'What ! the lady—' 'Sir,' saith she,  
 ('I thank you kindly, sir), I tell you true  
 She's gone,' and 'here's a coil' methought 'will be.'  
 'Gone—where?' 'T is past my wit forsooth to say  
 If they went Malvern way or Hereford way.

A carriage took her up—where three roads meet  
They needs must pass ; you may o’ertake it yet.’  
And ‘Oyez, Oyez’ peals adown the street,  
‘Lost, lost, a golden heart with pearls beset.  
‘I know her, sir?—not I. To help this treat,  
Many strange ladies from the country met.’  
O heart beset with pearls ! my hope was crost.  
‘Farewell, good dame. Lost ! oh my lady lost.’

And ‘Oyez, Oyez’ following after me  
On my great errand to the sundown went.  
Lost, lost, and lost, when as the long roads flee  
Up tumbled hills, on each for eyes attent  
A carriage creepeth.  
‘Though in neither she,  
I ne’er shall know life’s worst impoverishment  
An empty heart. No time, I stake my all,  
To right ! and chase the rose-red evenfall.

Fly up, good steed, fly on. Take the sharp rise  
As ’t were a plain. A lady sits ; but one.  
So fast the pace she turns in startled wise,  
She sets her gaze on mine and all is done.  
“Persian Roxana” might have raised such eyes  
When Alexander sought her. Now the sun  
Dips, and my day is over ; turn and fleet  
The world fast flies, again do three roads meet.’

I took the left, and for some cause unknown  
 Full fraught of hope and joy the way pursued,  
 Yet chose strong reasons speeding up alone  
 To fortify me 'gainst a shock more rude.  
 E'en so the diver carrieth down a stone  
 In hand, lest he float up before he would,  
 And end his walk upon the rich sea-floor,  
 Those pearls he failed to grasp never to look on more.

Then as the low moon heaveth waxen white,  
 The carriage, and it turns into a gate.  
 Within sit three in pale pathetic light.  
 O surely one of these my love, my fate.  
 But ere I pass they wind away from sight.  
 Then cottage casements glimmer. All elate  
 I cross a green, there yawns with opened latch  
 A village hostel capped in comely thatch.

'The same world made for all is made for each.  
 To match a heart's magnificence of hope,  
 How shall good reason best high action teach  
 To win of custom, and with home to cope?  
 How warrantably may he look to win  
 A star, that wants it? Shall he lie and grope?  
 No, truly.—I will see her; tell my tale,  
 See her this once,—and if I fail—I fail.'

Thus with myself I spoke. A rough brick floor  
Made the place homely ; I would rest me there.  
But how to sleep? Forth of the unlocked door  
I passed at midnight, lustreless white air  
Made strange the hour, that ecstasy not o'er  
I moved among the shadows, all my care—  
Counted a shadow—her drawn near to bless,  
Impassioned out of fear, rapt, motionless.

Now a long pool and water-hens at rest  
(As doughty seafolk dusk, at Malabar),  
A few pale stars lie trembling on its breast.  
'Hath the Most High of all His host afar  
One most supremely beautiful, one best,  
Dearest of all the flock, one favourite star?  
His Image given, in part the children know  
They love one first and best. It may be so.

Now a long hedge ; here dream the woolly folk ;  
A majesty of silence is about.  
Transparent mist rolls off the pool like smoke,  
And Time is in his trance and Night devout.  
Now the still house. O an I knew she woke  
I could not look, the sacred moon sheds out  
So many blessings on her rooftree low,  
Each more pathetic that she nought doth know.

I would not love a little, nor my start  
 Make with the multitude that love and cease.  
 He gives too much that giveth half a heart,  
 Too much for liberty, too much for peace.  
 Let me the first and best and highest impart,  
 The whole of it, and heaven the whole increase !  
 For *that* were not too much.

(In the moon's wake  
 How the grass glitters, for her sweetest sake.)

I would toward her walk the silver floors.  
 Love loathes an average—all extreme things deal  
 To love—sea-deep and dazzling height for stores.  
 There are on Fortune's errant foot can steal,  
 Can guide her blindfold in at their own doors,  
 Or dance elate upon her slippery wheel.  
 Courage ! there are 'gainst hope can still advance,  
 Dowered with a sane, a wise extravagance.

A song

To one a dreaming : when the dew  
 Falls, 't is a time for rest ; and when the bird  
 Calls, 't is a time to wake, to wake for you.  
 A long-waking, aye, waking till a word  
 Come from her coral mouth to be the true  
 Sum of all good heart wanted, ear hath heard.

Yet if, alas ! might love thy dolour be,  
 Dream, dear heart dear, and do not dream of me.

I sing

To one awakened, when the heart  
Cries 't is a day for thought, and when the soul  
Sighs choose thy part, O choose thy part, thy part.

I bring to one belovèd, bring my whole  
Store, make in loving, make O make mine art  
More. Yet I ask no, ask no wishèd goal

But this—if loving might thy dolour be,  
Wake, O my lady loved, and love not me.

That which the many win, love's niggard sum,  
I will not, if love's all be left behind.

That which I am I cannot unbecome,  
My past not unpossess, nor future blind.  
Let me all risk, and leave the deep heart dumb  
For ever, if that maiden sits enshrined  
The saint of one more happy. She is she.  
There is none other. Give her then to me.

Or else to be the better for her face  
Beholding it no more.' Then all night through  
The shadow moves with infinite dark grace.  
The light is on her windows, and the dew  
Comforts the world and me, till in my place  
At moonsetting, when stars flash out to view,  
Comes 'neath the cedar boughs a great repose,  
The peace of one renouncing, and then a doze.

There was no dream, yet waxed a sense in me  
Asleep, that patience was the better way,  
Appeasement for a want that needs must be,  
Grew as the dominant mind forbore its sway  
Till whistling sweet stirred in the cedar tree—  
I started—woke—it was the dawn of day.  
That was the end. 'Slow solemn growth of light,  
Come what come will, remains to me this night.'

It was the end, with dew ordained to melt,  
How easily was learned, how all too soon  
Not there, not thereabout such maiden dwelt.  
What was it promised me so fair a boon?  
Heart-hope is not less vain because heart-felt,  
Gone forth once more in search of her at noon  
Through the sweet country side on hill, on plain,  
I sought and sought many long days in vain.

To Malvern next, with feathery woodland hung,  
Whereto old Piers the Plowman came to teach,  
On her green vasty hills the lay was sung,  
He too, it may be, lisping in his speech,  
'To make the English sweet upon his tongue.'  
How many maidens beautiful, and each  
Might him delight, that loved no other fair;  
But Malvern blessed not me,—she was not there.



Then to that town, but still my fate the same,  
 Crowned with old works that her right well bescem,  
 To gaze upon her field of ancient fame  
 And muse on the sad thrall's most piteous dream,  
 By whom a 'shadow like an angel came,'  
 Crying out on Clarence, its wild eyes a gleam,  
 Accusing echoes here still falter and flee,  
 'That stabbed me on the field by Tewkesbury:

It nothing 'vailed that yet I sought and sought,  
 Part of my very self was left behind,  
 Till risen in wrath against th' o'ermastering thought,  
 'Let me be thankful,' quoth the better mind,  
 Thankful for her, though utterly to nought  
 She brings my heart's cry, and I live to find  
 A new self of the old self exigent  
 In the light of my divining discontent.

The picture of a maiden bidding "Arise,  
 I am the Art of God. He shows by me  
 His great idea, so well as sin-stained eyes  
 Love aidant can behold it."

Is this she?

Or is it mine own love for her supplies

The meaning and the power? Howe'er this be,  
 She is the interpreter by whom most near  
 Man's soul is drawn to beauty and pureness here.

The sweet idea, invisible hitherto,  
Is in her face, unconscious delegate ;  
That thing she wots not of ordained to do :  
But also it shall be her votary's fate,  
Through her his early days of ease to eschew,  
Struggle with life and prove its weary weight.  
All the great storms that rising rend the soul,  
Are life in little, imaging the whole.'

Ay, so as life is, love is, in their ken  
Stars, infant yet, both thought to grasp, to keep,  
Then came the morn of passionate splendour, when  
So sweet the light, none but for bliss could weep,  
And then the strife, the toil ; but we are men,  
Strong, brave to battle with the stormy deep ;  
Then fear—and then renunciation—then  
Appeals unto the Infinite Pity—and sleep.

But after life the sleep is long. Not so  
With love. Love buried lieth not straight, not still,  
Love starts, and after lull awakes to know  
All the deep things again. And next his will,  
That dearest pang is, never to forego.  
He would all service, hardship, fret fulfil.  
Unhappy love ! and I of that great host  
Unhappy love who cry, unhappy most.

Because renunciation was so short,  
The starvèd heart so easily awaked ;  
A dream could do it, a bud, a bird, a thought,  
But I betook me with that want which ached  
To neighbour lands where strangeness with me wrought.  
The old work was so hale, its fitness slaked  
Soul-thirst for truth. ' I knew not doubt nor fear,'  
Its language, ' war or worship sure, sincere.'

Then where by Art the high did best translate  
Life's infinite pathos to the soul, set down  
Beauty and mystery, that imperious hate  
On its best braveness doth and sainthood frown,  
Nay more the MASTER'S manifest pity—' wait,  
Behold the palmgrove and the promised crown.  
He suffers with thee, for thee.—Lo the Child !  
Comfort thy heart ; He certainly so smiled.'

Thus love and I wore through the winter time.  
Then saw her demon blush Vesuvius try,  
Then evil ghosts white from the awful prime,  
Thrust up sharp peaks to tear the tender sky.  
' No more to do but hear that English chime,'  
I to a kinsman wrote. He made reply,  
' As home I bring my girl and boy full soon,  
I pass through Evesham,—meet me there at noon.

'The bells your father loved you needs must hear,  
Seek Oxford next with me,' and told the day.

'Upon the bridge I'll meet you. What! how dear  
Soever was a dream, shall it bear sway  
To mar the waking?'

I set forth, drew near,  
Beheld a goodly tower, twin churches grey,  
Evesham. The bridge, and noon. I nothing knew  
What to my heart that fateful chime would do.

For suddenly the sweet bells overcame  
A world unsouled; did all with man endow;  
His yearning almost tell that passeth name  
And said they were full old, and they were now  
And should be; and their sighing upon the same  
For our poor sake that pass they did avow,  
While on clear Avon flowed like man's short day  
The shining river of life lapsing away.

The stroke of noon. The bell-bird! yes and no.

Winds of remembrance swept as over the foam  
Of anti-natal shores. At home is it so,

My country folk? Ay, 'neath this pale blue dome,  
Many of you in the moss lie low—lie low.

Ah! since I have not HER, give me too, home.  
A footstep near! I turned; past likelihood,  
Past hope, before me on the bridge—SHE STOOD.

A rosy urchin had her hand ; this cried,  
‘ We think you are our cousin—yes, you are ;  
I said so to Estelle.’ The violet-eyed,  
‘ If this be Geoffrey ?’ asked ; and as from far  
A doubt came floating up ; but she denied  
Her thought, yet blushed. O beautiful ! my Star !  
Then, with the lifting of my hat, each wore  
That look which owned to each, ‘ We have met before.’

Then was the strangest bliss in life made mine ;  
I saw the almost worshipped—all remote ;  
The Star so high above that used to shine,  
Translated from the void where it did float,  
And brought into relation with the fine  
Charities earth hath grown. A great joy smote  
Me silent, and the child atween us tway,  
We watched the lucent river stealing away.

While her deep eyes down on the ripple fell,  
Quoth the small imp, ‘ How fast you go and go,  
You Avon. Does it wish to stop, Estelle,  
And hear the clock, and see the orchards blow ?  
*It does not care !* Not when the old big bell  
Makes a great buzzing noise ?—Who told you so ?’  
And then to me, ‘ I like to hear it hum.  
Why do you think that father could not come ?’

Estelle forgot her violin. And he,  
 O then he said : " How careless, child, of you ;  
 I must send on for it. 'T would pity be  
 If that were lost."

I want to learn it too ;

And when I 'm nine I shall.'

Then turning, she

Let her sweet eyes unveil them to my view ;  
 Her stately grace outmatched my dream of old,  
 But ah ! the smile dull memory had not told.

My kinsman next, with care-worn kindly brow.  
 ' Well, father,' quoth the imp, ' we 've done our part.  
 We found him.'

And she, wholly girlish now,

Laid her young hand on his with lovely art  
 And sweet excuses. O ! I made my vow  
 I would all dare, such life did warm my heart ;  
 We journeyed, all the air with scents of price  
 Was laden, and the goal was Paradise.

When that the Moors betook them to their sand,  
Their domination over in fair Spain,  
Each locked, men say, his door in that loved land.  
And took the key in hope to come again.  
On Moorish walls yet hung, long dust each hand,  
The keys, but not the might to use, remain ;  
Is there such house in some blest land for me ?  
I can, I will, I do reach down the key.

A country conquered oft, and long before,  
Of generations aye ordained to win ;  
If mine the power, I will unlock the door.  
Enter, O light, I bear a sunbeam in.  
What, did the crescent wane ! Yet man is more,  
And love achieves because to heaven akin.  
O life ! to hear again that wandering bell,  
And hear it at thy feet, Estelle, Estelle.

Full oft I want the sacred throated bird,  
Over our limitless waste of light which spoke  
The spirit of the call my fathers heard,  
Saying ' Let us pray,' and old world echoes woke  
Ethereal minster bells that still averr'd,  
And with their phantom notes th' all silence broke  
' The fanes are far, but whom they shrined is near  
Thy God, the Island God, is here, is here.'



To serve ; to serve a thought, and serve apart  
 To meet ; a few short days, a maiden won.

‘ Ah, sweet, sweet home, I must divide my heart,  
 Betaking me to countries of the sun.’

‘ What straight-hung leaves, what rays that twinkle and  
 dart,  
 Make me to like them.’

‘ Love, it shall be done.’

‘ What weird dawn-fire across the wide hill flies.’  
 ‘ It is the flame-tree’s challenge to yon scarlet skies.’

‘ Hark, hark, O hark ! the spirit of a bell !  
 What would it? (‘ Toll.’) An air-hung sacred call,  
 Athwart the forest shade it strangely fell’—  
 ‘ Toll ’—‘ Toll.’

The longed-for voice, but ah, withal  
 I felt, I knew, it was my father’s knell

That touched and could the over-sense enthrall.  
 Perfect his peace, a whispering pure and deep  
 As theirs who ’neath his native towers by Avon sleep.

If love and death are ever reconciled,  
'T is when the old lie down for the great rest.  
We rode across the bush, a sylvan wild  
That was an almost world, whose calm oppressed  
With audible silence ; and great hills insiled  
Rose out as from a sea. Consoling, blest  
And blessing spoke she, and the reedflower spread,  
And tall rock lilies towered above her head.

Sweet is the light aneath our matchless blue,  
The shade below yon passion plant that lies,  
And very sweet is love, and sweet are you,  
My little children dear, with violet eyes,  
And sweet about the dawn to hear anew  
The sacred monotone of peace arise.  
Love, 't is thy welcome from the air-hung bell,  
Congratulant and clear. Estelle, Estelle.





## LOSS AND WASTE.

**U**P to far Osteroe and Suderoe  
The deep sea-floor lies strewn with Spanish  
wrecks,  
O'er minted gold the fair-haired fishers go,  
O'er sunken bravery of high carved decks.

In earlier days great Carthage suffered bale  
(All her waste works choke under sandy shoals) ;  
And reckless hands tore down the temple veil ;  
And Omar burned the Alexandrian rolls.

The Old World arts men suffered not to last,  
Flung down they trampled lie and sunk from view,  
He lets wild forest for these ages past  
Grow over the lost cities of the New.

O for a life that shall not be refused  
To see the lost things found, and waste things used.



## ON A PICTURE.



AS a forlorn soul waiting by the Styx  
Dimly expectant of lands yet more dim,  
Might peer afraid where shadows change and  
mix

Till the dark ferryman shall come for him ;

And past all hope a long ray in his sight,

Fall'n trickling down the steep crag Hades-black

Reveals an upward path to life and light,

Nor any let but he should mount that track :

As with the sudden shock of joy amazed,

He might a motionless sweet moment stand,

So doth that mortal lover, silent, dazed,

For hope had died and loss was near at hand.

‘Wilt thou?’ his quest. Unready but for ‘Nay,’

He stands at fault for joy, she whispering ‘Ay.’



## THE SLEEP OF SIGISMUND.

**T**HE doom'd king pacing all night through  
the windy fallow.  
' Let me alone, mine enemy, let me alone,'  
Never a Christian bell that dire thick gloom  
to hallow,  
Or guide him, shelterless, succourless, thrust from his own.

Foul spirits riding the wind do flout at him friendless,  
The rain and the storm on his head beat ever at will ;  
His weird is on him to grope in the dark with endless  
Weariful feet for a goal that shifteth still.

A sleuth-hound baying ! The sleuth-hound bayeth be-  
hind him,  
His head he flying and stumbling turns back to the sound,  
Whom doth the sleuth-hound follow ? What if it find  
him ;  
Up ! for the scent lieth thick, up from the level ground.

Up, on, he must on, to follow his weird essaying,  
 Lo you, a flood from the crag cometh raging past,  
 He falls, he fights in the water, no stop, no staying,  
 Soon the king's head goes under, the weird is dreed at  
 last.

## I

'Wake, O king, the best star worn  
 In the crown of night, forlorn  
 Blinks a fine white point—'t is morn.'  
 Soft! The queen's voice, fair is she,  
 'Wake!' He waketh, living, free,  
 In the chamber of arras lieth he.  
 Delicate dim shadows yield  
 Silken curtains over head  
 All abloom with work of need,  
 Martagon and milleflower spread.  
 On the wall his golden shield,  
 Dinted deep in battle field,  
 When the host o' the Khalif fled.  
 Gold to gold! Long sunbeams flit  
 Upward, tremble and break on it.  
 'Ay, 't is over, all things writ  
 Of my sleep shall end awake,  
 Now is joy, and all its bane  
 The dark shadow of after pain.'  
 Then the queen saith, 'Nay, but break  
 Unto me for dear love's sake

This thy matter. Thou hast been  
In great bitterness I ween  
All the night-time.' But 'My queen,  
Life, love, lady, rest content,  
Ill dreams fly, the night is spent,  
Good day draweth on. Lament  
'Vaileth not,—yea peace,' quoth he ;  
'Sith this thing no better may be,  
Best were held 'twixt thee and me.'  
Then the fair queen, ' Even so  
As thou wilt, O king, but know  
Mickle nights have wrought thee woe,  
Yet the last was troubled sore  
Above all that went before.'  
Quoth the king, ' No more, no more.'  
Then he riseth, pale of blee,  
As one spent, and utterly  
Master'd of dark destiny.

## II

Comes a day for glory famed  
Tidings brought, the enemy shamed,  
Fallen ; now is peace proclaimed.  
And a swarm of bells on high  
Make their sweet din scale the sky,  
'Hail ! hail ! hail !' the people cry



To the king his queen beside,  
 And the knights in armour ride  
 After until eventide.

## III

All things great may life afford,  
 Praise, power, love, high pomp, fair gaud,  
 Till the banquet be toward  
 Hath this king. Then day takes flight,  
 Sinketh sun and fadeth light,  
 Late he coucheth—Night ; 't is night.

**The proud king heading the host on his red-roan charger.**

Dust. On a thicket of spears glares the Syrian sun,  
 The Saracens swarm to the onset, larger aye larger  
 Loom their fierce cohorts, they shout as the day were  
 won.

Brown faces fronting the steel-bright armour, and ever  
 The crash o' the combat runs on with a mighty cry,  
 Fell tumult ; trampling and carnage—then fails endeavour,  
 O shame upon shame—the Christians falter and fly.

The foe upon them, the foe afore and behind them,  
 The king borne back in the mêlée ; all, all is vain ;  
 They fly with death at their heels, fierce sun-rays blind  
 them,  
 Riderless steeds affrighted, tread down their ranks  
 amain.

Disgrace, dishonour, no rally, ah no retrieving,  
 The scorn of scorns shall his name and his nation  
 brand,  
 'T is a sword that smites from the rear, his helmet  
 cleaving,  
 That hurls him to earth, to his death on the desert  
 sand.

Ever they fly, the cravens, and ever reviling  
 Flies after. Athirst, ashamed, he yieldeth his breath,  
 While one looks down from his charger; a calm slow  
 smiling  
 Curleth his lip. 'T is the Khalif. And this is death.

## IV

'Wake, yon purple peaks arise,  
 Jagged, bare, through saffron skies;  
 Now is heard a twittering sweet,  
 For the mother-martins meet,  
 Where wet ivies, dew-besprent,  
 Glisten on the battlement.  
 Now the lark at heaven's gold gate  
 Aiming, sweetly chides on fate  
 That his brown wings wearied were  
 When he, sure, was almost there.  
 Now the valley mist doth break,  
 Shifting sparkles edge the lake,  
 Love, Lord, Master, wake, O wake!'

## v

Ay, he wakes,—and dull of cheer,  
Though this queen be very dear,  
Though a respite come with day  
From th' abhorrèd flight and fray,  
E'en though life be not the cost,  
Nay, nor crown nor honour lost ;  
For in his soul abideth fear  
Worse than of the Khalif's spear,  
Smiting when perforce in flight  
He was borne,—for that was night,  
That his weird. But now 't is day,  
' And good sooth I know not—nay,  
Know not how this thing could be.  
Never, more it seemeth me  
Than when left the weird to dree,  
I am I. And it was I  
Felt or ever they turned to fly,  
How, like wind, a tremor ran,  
The right hand of every man  
Shaking. Ay, all banners shook,  
And the red all cheeks forsook,  
Mine as theirs. Since this was I,  
Who my soul shall certify  
When again I face the foe  
Manful courage shall not go ?

Ay, it is not thrust o' a spear,  
Scorn of infidel eyes austere,  
But mine own fear—is to fear.'

## VI

After sleep thus sore bested,  
Beaten about and buffeted,  
Featly fares the morning spent  
In high sport and tournament.

## VII

Served within his sumptuous tent,  
Looks the king in quiet wise,  
Till this fair queen yield the prize  
To the bravest ; but when day  
Falleth to the west away,  
Unto her i' the silent hour,  
While she sits in her rose-bower  
Come, 'O love, full oft,' quoth she,  
'I at dawn have prayèd thee  
Thou would'st tell o' the weird to me,  
Sith I might some counsel find  
Of my wit or in my mind  
Thee to better.' 'Ay, e'en so,  
But the telling shall let thee know,'  
Quoth the king, 'is neither scope  
For sweet counsel nor fair hope,

Nor is found for respite room,  
Till the uttermost crack of doom.

## VIII

Then the queen saith, 'Woman's wit  
No man asketh aid of it,  
Not wild hyssop on a wall  
Is of less account ; or small  
Glossy gnats that flit i' the sun  
Less worth weighing—light so light !  
Yet when all 's said—ay, all done,  
Love, I love thee ! By love's might  
I will counsel thee aright,  
Or would share the weird to-night.'  
Then he answer'd, 'Have thy way.  
Know 't is two years gone and a day  
Since I, walking lone and late,  
Pondered sore mine ill estate ;  
Open murmurers, foes concealed,  
Famines dire i' the marches round,  
Neighbour kings unfriendly found,  
Ay, and treacherous plots revealed  
Where I trusted. I bid stay  
All my knights at the high crossway,  
And did down the forest fare  
To bethink me, and despair.

“ Ah ! thou gilded toy a throne,  
If one mounts to thee alone,”  
Quoth I, mourning while I went,  
“ Haply he may drop content  
As a lark wing-weary down  
To the level, and his crown  
Leave for another man to don ;  
Throne, thy gold steps raised upon.  
But for me—O as for me  
What is named I would not dree,  
Earn, or conquer, or forego  
For the barring of overthrow.”

## IX

‘ Aloud I spake, but verily  
Never an answer looked should be.  
But it came to pass from shade  
Pacing to an open glade,  
Which the oaks a mighty wall  
Fence about, methought a call  
Sounded, then a pale thin mist  
Rose, a pillar, and fronted me,  
Rose and took a form I wist,  
And it wore a hood on ’ts head,  
And a long white garment spread,  
And I saw the eyes thereof.

## X

‘Then my plumèd cap I doff,  
Stooping. ’T is the white-witch. “Hail,”  
Quoth the witch, “thou shalt prevail  
An thou wilt ; I swear to thee  
All thy days shall glorious shine,  
Great and rich, ay, fair and fine,  
So what followeth rest my fee,  
So thou ’lt give thy sleep to me.”

## XI

‘While she spake my heart did leap.  
Waking is man’s life, and sleep—  
What is sleep?—a little death  
Coming after, and methought  
Life is mine and death is nought  
Till it come,—so day is mine  
I will risk the sleep to shine  
In the waking.

And she saith,  
In a soft voice clear and low,  
“Give thy plumèd cap also  
For a token.”’

‘Didst thou give?’  
Quoth the queen ; and ‘As I live,’



He makes answer, 'none can tell.  
I did will my sleep to sell,  
And in token held to her  
That she askèd. And it fell  
To the grass. I saw no stir  
In her hand or in her face,  
And no going ; but the place  
Only for an evening mist  
Was made empty. There it lay  
That same plumèd cap, alway  
On the grasses—but I wist  
Well, it must be let to lie,  
And I left it. Now the tale  
Ends, th' events do testify  
Of her truth. The days go by  
Better and better ; nought doth ail  
In the land, right happy and hale  
Dwell the seely folk ; but sleep  
Brings a reckoning ; then forth creep  
Dreaded creatures, worms of might  
Crested with my plumèd cap  
Loll about my neck all night,  
Bite me in the side, and lap  
My heart's blood. Then oft the weird  
Drives me, where amazed, afeard,  
I do safe on a river strand  
Mark one sinking hard at hand  
While fierce sleuth-hounds that me track

Fly upon me, bear me back,  
Fling me away, and he for lack  
Of man's aid in piteous wise  
Goeth under, drowns and dies.

## XII

'O sweet wife, I suffer sore—  
O methinks aye more and more  
Dull my day, my courage numb,  
Shadows from the night to come.  
But no counsel, hope, nor aid  
Is to give ; a crown being made  
Power and rule, yea all good things  
Yet to hang on this same weird  
I must dree it, ever that brings  
Chastening from the white-witch feared.  
O that dreams mote me forsake,  
Would that man could alway wake.'

## XIII

Now good sooth doth counsel fail,  
Ah this queen is pale, so pale.  
'Love,' she sigheth, 'thou didst not well  
Listening to the white-witch fell,  
Leaving her doth thee advance  
Thy plumèd cap of maintenance.'

## XIV

‘She is white, as white snow flake,’  
 Quoth the king ; ‘a man shall make  
 Bargains with her and not sin.’  
 ‘Ay,’ she saith, ‘but an he win,  
 Let him look the right be done  
 Else the rue shall be his own.

## XV

No more words. The stars are bright,  
 For the feast high halls be dight,  
 Late he coucheth. Night—’t is night.

**The dead king lying in state in the Minster holy.**

Fifty candles burn at his head and burn at his feet,  
 A crown and royal apparel upon him lorn and lowly,  
 And the cold hands stiff as horn by their cold palms  
 meet.

Two days dead. Is he dead? Nay, nay—but is he  
 living?

The weary monks have ended their chantings manifold,  
 The great door swings behind them, night winds entrance  
 giving,

The candles flare and drip on him, warm and he so cold.

Neither to move nor to moan, though sunk and though  
swallow'd

In earth he shall soon be trodden hard and no more  
seen.

Soft you the door again! Was it a footstep followed,  
Falter'd, and yet drew near him?—Malva, Malva the  
queen!

One hand o' the dead king liveth (e'en so him seemeth)  
On the purple robe, on the ermine that folds his breast  
Cold, very cold. Yet e'en at that pass esteemeth  
The king, it were sweet if she kissed the place of its rest.

Laid her warm face on his bosom, a fair wife grievèd  
For the lord and love of her youth, and bewailed him  
sore;

Laid her warm face on the bosom of her bereavèd  
Soon to go under, never to look on her more.

His candles guide her with pomp funereal flaring,  
Out of the gulfy dark to the bier whereon he lies.  
Cometh this queen i' the night for grief or for daring,  
Out o' the dark to the light with large affrighted eyes?

The pale queen speaks in the Presence with fear upon  
her,

'Where is the ring I gave to thee, where is my ring?

I vowed—'t was an evil vow—by love, and by honour,  
Come life or come death to be thine, thou poor dead  
king.'

The pale queen's honour! A low laugh scathing and  
sereing—

A mumbling as made by the dead in the tombs ye wot.  
Braveth the dead this queen? 'Hear it, whoso hath  
hearing,  
I vowed by my love, cold king, but I loved thee not.'

Honour! An echo in aisles and the solemn portals,  
Low sinketh this queen by the bier with its freight for-  
lorn;

Yet kneeling, 'Hear me!' she crieth, 'you just immortals,  
You saints bear witness I vowed and am not forsworn.

I vowed in my youth, fool-king, when the golden fetter  
Thy love that bound me and bann'd me full weary I  
wore,

But all poor men of thy menai I held them better,  
All stalwart knights of thy train unto me were more.

Twenty years I have lived on earth and two beside thee,  
Thirty years thou didst live on earth, and two on the  
throne:

Let it suffice there be none of thy rights denied thee,  
Though I dare thy presence—I—come for my ring  
alone.'

She risen shuddereth, peering, afraid to linger.

Behold her ring, it shineth! 'Now yield to me, thou  
dead,

For this do I dare the touch of thy stark stiff finger.'

The queen hath drawn her ring from his hand, the  
queen hath fled.

'O woman fearing sore, to whom my man's heart cleavèd,  
The faith enwrought with love and life hath mocks for  
its meed'—

The dead king lying in state, of his past bereavèd,  
Twice dead. Ay, this is death. Now dieth the king  
indeed.

## XVI

'Wake, the seely gnomes do fly,  
Drenched across yon rainy sky,  
With the vex'd moon-mother'd elves,  
And the clouds do weep themselves  
Into morning.

All night long  
Hath thy weird thee sore opprest ;  
Wake, I have found within my breast  
Counsel.' Ah, the weird was strong,  
But the time is told. Release  
Openeth on him when his eyes  
Lift them in dull desolate wise.  
And behold he is at peace.

Ay, but silent. Of all done  
And all suffer'd in the night,  
Of all ills that do him spite  
She shall never know that one.  
Then he heareth accents bland,  
Seeth the queen's ring on his hand,  
And he riseth calmed withal.

## XVII

Rain and wind on the palace wall  
Beat and bluster, sob and moan,  
When at noon he musing lone,  
Comes the queen anigh his seat,  
And she kneeleth at his feet.

## XVIII

Quoth the queen, 'My love, my lord,  
Take thy wife and take thy sword,  
We must forth in the stormy weather,  
Thou and I to the witch together.  
Thus I rede thee counsel deep,  
Thou didst ill to sell thy sleep,  
Turning so man's wholesome life  
From its meaning. Thine intent  
None shall hold for innocent.



Thou dost take thy good things first,  
Then thou art cast into the worst ;  
First the glory, then the strife.  
Nay, but first thy trouble dree,  
So thy peace shall sweeter be.  
First to work and then to rest,  
Is the way for our humanity,  
Ay, she sayeth that loves thee best,  
We must forth and from this strife  
Buy the best part of man's life ;  
Best and worst thou holdest still  
Subject to a witch's will.  
Thus I rede thee counsel deep,  
Thou didst ill to sell thy sleep ;  
Take the crown from off thy head,  
Give it the white-witch instead,  
If in that she say thee nay,  
Get the night,—and give the day.'

## XIX

Then the king (amazèd, mild,  
As one reasoning with a child  
All his speech) : ' My wife ! my fair !'  
And his hand on her brown hair  
Trembles ; ' Lady, dost indeed  
Weigh the meaning of thy rede ?

Would'st thou dare the dropping away  
Of allegiance, should our sway  
And sweet splendour and renown  
All be risked? (methinks a crown  
Doth become thee marvellous well).  
We ourself are, truth to tell,  
Kingly both of wont and kind,  
Suits not such the craven mind.'  
'Yet this weird thou can'st not dree.'  
Quoth the queen, 'And live ;' then he,  
'I must die and leave the fair  
Unborn, long-desirèd heir  
To his rightful heritage.'

## XX

But this queen arisen doth high  
Her two hands uplifting, sigh  
'God forbid.' And he to assuage  
Her keen sorrow, for his part  
Searcheth, nor can find in his heart  
Words. And weeping she will rest  
Her sweet cheek upon his breast,  
Whispering, 'Dost thou verily  
Know thou art to blame? Ah me,  
Come,' and yet beseecheth she,  
'Ah me, come.'

For good for ill,  
Whom man loveth hath her will.  
Court and castle left behind,  
Stolen forth in the rain and wind,  
Soon they are deep in the forest, fain  
The white-witch to raise again ;  
Down and deep where flat o'erhead  
Layer on layer do cedars spread,  
Down where lordly maples strain,  
Wrestling with the storm amain.

## XXI

Wide-wing'd eagles struck on high  
Headlong fall'n break through, and lie  
With their prey in piteous wise,  
And no film on their dead eyes.  
Matted branches grind and crash,  
Into darkness dives the flash,  
Stabs, a dread gold dirk of fire,  
Loads the lift with splinters dire.  
Then a pause i' the deadly feud—  
And a sick cowed quietude.

## XXII

Soh ! A pillar misty and grey,  
'T is the white-witch in the way.

Shall man deal with her and gain ?  
I trow not. Albeit the twain  
Costly gear and gems and gold  
Freely offer, she will hold  
Sleep and token for the pay  
She did get for greatening day.

## XXIII

‘ Or the night shall rest my fee  
Or the day shall nought of me,’  
Quoth the witch. ‘ An’t thee beseem,  
Sell thy kingdom for a dream.’

## XXIV

‘ Now what will be let it be !’  
Quoth the queen ; ‘ but choose the right.’  
And the white-witch scorns at her,  
Stately standing in their sight.  
Then without or sound or stir  
She is not. For offering meet  
Lieth the token at their feet,  
Which they, weary and sore bestead  
In the storm, lift up, full fain  
Ere the waning light hath fled  
Those high towers they left to gain.

## XXV

Deep among tree roots astray  
Here a torrent tears its way,  
There a cedar split aloft  
Lies head downward. Now the oft  
Muttering thunder, now the wind  
Wakens. How the path to find?  
How the turning? Deep ay deep,  
Far ay far. She needs must weep,  
This fair woman, lost, astray  
In the forest ; nought to say.  
Yet the sick thoughts come and go,  
'I, 't was I would have it so.'

## XXVI

Shelter at the last, a roof  
Wrought of ling (in their behoof,  
Foresters, that drive the deer).  
What, and must they couch them here?  
Ay, and ere the twilight fall  
Gather forest berries small  
And nuts down beaten for a meal.

## XXVII

Now the shy wood-wonners steal  
Nearer, bright-eyed furry things,  
Winking owls on silent wings

Glance, and float away. The light  
 In the wake o' the storm takes flight,  
 Day departeth : night—'t is night.

**The crown'd king musing at morn by a clear  
 sweet river.**

Palms on the slope o' the valley, and no winds blow ;  
 Birds blameless, dove-eyed, mystical talk deliver,  
 Oracles haply. The language he doth not know.

Bare, blue, are yon peakèd hills for a rampart lying,  
 As dusty gold is the light in the palms o'erhead,  
 'What is the name o' the land? and this calm sweet sighing,  
 If it be echo, where first was it caught and spread?

I might—I might be at rest in some field Elysian,  
 If this be asphodel set in the herbage fair,  
 I know not how I should wonder, so sweet the vision,  
 So clear and silent the water, the field, the air.

Love, are you by me! Malva, what think you this  
 meaneth?

Love, do you see the fine folk as they move over there?  
 Are they immortals? Look you a wingèd one leaneth  
 Down from yon pine to the river of us unaware.

All unaware ; and the country is full of voices,  
 Mild strangers passing : they reckon not of me nor of thee.

List ! about and around us wondrous sweet noises,  
Laughter of little children and maids that dreaming be.

Love, I can see their dreams.' A dim smile flitteth  
Over her lips, and they move as in peace supreme,  
And a small thing, silky haired, beside her sitteth,  
'O this is thy dream atween us—this is thy dream.'

Was it then truly his dream with her dream that blended?  
'Speak, dear child dear,' quoth the queen, 'and mine  
own little son.'  
'Father,' the small thing murmurs ; then all is ended,  
He starts from that passion of peace—ay, the dream is  
done.

## XXVIII

'I have been in a good land,'  
Quoth the king : 'O sweet sleep bland,  
Blessed ! I am grown to more ;  
Now the doing of right hath moved  
Me to love of right, and proved  
If one doth it, he shall be  
Twice the man he was before.  
Verily and verily,  
Thou fair woman, thou didst well ;  
I look back and scarce may tell  
Those false days of tinsel sheen,  
Flattery, feasting, that have been.



Shows of life that were but shows,  
How they held me ; being I ween  
Like sand-pictures thin, that rose  
Quivering, when our thirsty bands  
Marched i' the hot Egyptian lands ;  
Shade of palms on a thick green plot,  
Pools of water that was not,  
Mocking us and melting away.

## XXIX

I have been a witch's prey,  
Art mine enemy now by day,  
Thou fell Fear? There comes an end  
To the day ; thou canst not wend  
After me where I shall fare,  
My foredoomèd peace to share.  
And awake with a better heart,  
I shall meet thee and take my part  
O' the dull world's dull spite ; with thine  
Hard will I strive for me and mine.'

## XXX

A page and a palfrey pacing nigh,  
Malva the queen awakes. A sigh—  
One amazèd moment—'Ay,  
We remember yesterday,

Let us to the palace straight :  
What ! do all my ladies wait—  
Is no zeal to find me ? What !  
No knights forth to meet the king ;  
Due observance, is it forgot ?'

## XXXI

'Lady,' quoth the page, 'I bring  
Evil news. Sir king, I say,  
My good lord of yesterday,  
Evil news.' This king saith low,  
'Yesterday, and yesterday,  
The queen's yesterday we know,  
Tell us thine.' 'Sir king,' saith he,  
'Hear. Thy castle in the night  
Was surprised, and men thy flight  
Learned but then ; thine enemy  
Of old days, our new king, reigns ;  
And sith thou wert not at pains  
To forbid it, hear alsò,  
Marvelling whereto this should grow  
How thy knights at break of morn  
Have a new allegiance sworn,  
And the men-at-arms rejoice,  
And the people give their voice  
For the conqueror. I, sir king,  
Rest thine only friend. I bring

Means of flight ; now therefore fly,  
A great price is on thy head.  
Cast her jewel'd mantle by,  
Mount thy queen i' the selle and hie  
(Sith disguise ye need, and bread)  
Down yon pleachèd track, down, down,  
Till a tower shall on thee frown ;  
Him that holds it show this ring :  
So farewell, my lord the king.'

## XXXII

Had one marked that palfrey led  
To the tower, he sooth had said,  
These are royal folk and rare—  
Jewels in her plaited hair  
Shine not clearer than her eyes,  
And her lord in goodly wise  
With his plumèd cap in 's hand  
Moves in the measure of command.

## XXXIII

Had one marked where stole forth two  
From the friendly tower anew,  
'Common folk,' he sooth had said,  
Making for the mountain track.  
Common, common, man and maid,

Clad in russet, and of kind  
Meet for russet. On his back  
A wallet bears the stalwart hind ;  
She, all shy, in rustic grace  
Steps beside her man apace,  
And wild roses match her face.

## XXXIV

Whither speed they? Where are toss'd  
Like sea foam the dwarfed pines  
At the jagged sharp inclines ;  
To the country of the frost  
Up the mountains to be lost,  
Lost. No better now may be,  
Lost where mighty hollows thrust  
'Twixt the fierce teeth of the world,  
Fill themselves with crimson dust  
When the tumbling sun down hurl'd  
Stares among them drearily,  
As a' wondering at the lone  
Gulfs that weird gaunt company  
Fenceth in. Lost there unknown,  
Lineage, nation, name, and throne.

## XXXV

Lo, in a crevice choked with ling  
And fir, this man, not now the king,

This Sigismund, hath made a fire,  
And by his wife in the dark night  
He leans at watch, her guard and squire.  
His wide eyes stare out for the light  
Weary. He needs must chide on fate,  
And she is asleep. ' Poor brooding mate,  
What ! wilt thou on the mountain crest  
Slippery and cold scoop thy first nest ?  
Or must I clear some uncouth cave  
That laired the mother wolf, and save—  
Spearing her cubs—the grey pelt fine  
To be a bed for thee and thine ?  
It is my doing. Ay,' quoth he,  
' Mine ; but who dares to pity thee  
Shall pity, not for loss of all,  
But that thou wert my wife perdie,  
E'en wife unto a witch's thrall,—  
A man beholden to the cold  
Cloud for a covering, he being sold  
And hunted for reward of gold.'

## XXXVI

But who shall chronicle the ways  
Of common folk—the nights and days  
Spent with rough goatherds on their snows,  
Of travellers come whence no man knows,

Then gone aloft on some sharp height  
In the dumb peace and the great light  
Amid brown eagles and wild roes ?

## XXXVII

'T is the whole world whereon they lie,  
The rocky pastures hung on high  
Shelve off upon an empty sky.  
But they creep near the edge, look down—  
Great heaven ! another world afloat,  
Moored as in seas of air ; remote  
As their own childhood ; swooning away  
Into a tenderer sweeter day,  
Innocent, sunny. ' O for wings !  
There lie the lands of other kings—  
I, Sigismund, my sometime crown  
Forfeit ; forgotten of renown  
My wars, my rule ; I fain would go  
Down to yon peace obscure.'

Even so ;

Down to the country of the thyme,  
Where young kids dance, and a soft chime  
Of sheepbells tinkles ; then at last  
Down to a country of hollows, cast  
Up at the mountains full of trees,  
Down to fruit orchards and wide leas,

## XXXVIII

With name unsaid and fame unsunned  
He walks that was King Sigismund.  
With palmers holy and pilgrims brown,  
New from the East, with friar and clown,  
He mingles in a wallèd town,  
And in the mart where men him scan  
He passes for a merchant man.  
For from his vest, where by good hap  
He thrust it, he his plumèd cap  
Hath drawn and plucked the gems away,  
And up and down he makes essay  
To sell them ; they are all his wares  
And wealth. He is a man of cares,  
A man of toil ; no roof hath he  
To shelter her full soon to be  
The mother of his dispossessed  
Desirèd heir.

## XXXIX

Few words are best.

He, once King Sigismund, saith few,  
But makes good diligence and true.  
Soon with the gold he gather'd so,  
A little homestead lone and low  
He buyeth : a field, a copse, with these  
A melon patch and mulberry trees.



And is the man content? Nay, morn  
Is toilsome, oft is noon forlorn,  
Though right be done and life be won,  
Yet hot is weeding in the sun,  
Yea scythe to wield and axe to swing,  
Are hard on sinews of a king.

## XL

And Malva, must she toil? E'en so.  
Full patiently she takes her part,  
All, all so new. But her deep heart  
Forebodes more change than shall be shown  
Betwixt a settle and a throne.  
And lost in musing she will go  
About the winding of her silk,  
About the skimming her goat's milk,  
About the kneading of her bread,  
And water drawn from her well-head.

## XLI

Then come the long nights dark and still,  
Then come the leaves and cover the sill,  
Then come the swift flocks of the stare,  
Then comes the snow—then comes the heir.

## XLII

If he be glad, if he be sad,  
How should one question when the hand  
Is full, the heart. That life he had  
While leisure was, aside may stand,  
Till he shall overtake the task  
Of every day, then let him ask  
(If he remember—if he will),  
'When I could sit me down and muse,  
And match my good against mine ill,  
And weigh advantage dulled by use  
At nothing, was it better with me?'  
But Sigismund ! It cannot be  
But that he toil, nor pause, nor sigh,  
A dreamer on a day gone by  
The king is come.

## XLIII

His vassals two  
Serve with all homage deep and due.  
He is contented, he doth find  
Belike the kingdom much to his mind.  
And when the long months of his long  
Reign are two years, and like a song  
Or from some sweeter world, a call  
From the king's mouth for fealty,

Buds soon to blossom in language fall,  
They listen and find not any plea  
Left, for fine chiding at destiny.

## XLIV

Sigismund hath ricked the hay,  
He sitteth at close o' a sultry day  
Under his mulberry boughs at ease.  
'Hey for the world, and the world is wide,  
The world is mine, and the world is— these.'  
Beautiful Malva leans at his side,  
And the small babbler talks at his knees.

## XLV

Riseth a waft as of summer air,  
Floating upon it what moveth there?  
Faint as the light of stars and wan  
As snow at night when the moon is gone,  
It is the white-witch risen once more.

## XLVI

The white-witch that tempted of yore  
So utterly doth substance lack,  
You may breathe her nearer and breathe her  
back.  
Soft her eyes, her speech full clear :  
'Hail, thou Sigismund my fere,  
Bargain with me yea or nay.

NAY, I go to my true place,  
 And no more thou seest my face.  
 YEA, the good be all thine own,  
 For now will I advance thy day,  
 And yet will leave the night alone.'

## XLVII

Sigismund makes answer, 'NAY.  
 Though the Highest heaped on me  
 Trouble, yet the same should be  
 Welcomer than weal from thee.  
 Nay ;—for ever and ever Nay.'  
 O, the white-witch floats away.  
 Look you, look ! A still pure smile  
 Blossoms on her mouth the while,  
 White wings peakèd high behind,  
 Bear her ;—no, the wafting wind,  
 For they move not,—floats her back,  
 Floats her up. They scarce may track  
 Her swift rising, shot on high  
 Like a ray from the western sky,  
 Or a lark from some grey wold  
 Utterly whelm'd in sunset gold.

## XLVIII

Then these two long silence hold,  
 And the lisping babe doth say,  
 'White white bird, it flew away.'

And they marvel at these things,  
 For her ghostly visitings  
 Turn to them another face.  
 Haply she was sent, a friend  
 Trying them, and to good end  
 For their better weal and grace ;  
 One more wonder let to be  
 In the might and mystery  
 Of the world, where verily  
 And good sooth a man may wend  
 All his life, and no more view  
 Than the one right next to do.

## XLIX

So, the welcome dusk is here,  
 Sweet is even, rest is dear ;  
 Mountain heads have lost the light,  
 Soon they couch them. Night—'t is night.

**Sigismund dreaming delightfully after his haying.**

(‘ Sleep of the labouring man,’ quoth King David, ‘ is sweet.’)

‘ Sigismund, Sigismund’—‘ Who is this calling and saying  
 “ Sigismund, Sigismund ”? O blessed night do not fleet.

Is it not dark—ay, methinks it is dark, I would slumber,  
 O I would rest till the swallow shall chirp ’neath mine  
 eaves.’

'Sigismund, Sigismund,' multitudes now without number  
 Calling, the noise is as dropping of rain upon leaves.

'Ay,' quoth he dreaming, 'say on, for I, Sigismund,  
 hear ye.'

'Sigismund, Sigismund, all the knights weary full sore.  
 Come back, King Sigismund, come, they shall love thee  
 and fear thee,  
 The people cry out, O come back to us, reign evermore.

The new king is dead, and we will not his son, no nor  
 brother,  
 Come with thy queen, is she busy yet, kneading of  
 cakes?

Sigismund, show us the boy, is he safe, and his mother,  
 Sigismund?'—dreaming he falls into laughter and wakes.

## L

And men say this dream came true,  
 For he walking in the dew  
 Turned aside while yet was red  
 On the highest mountain head,  
 Looking how the wheat he set  
 Flourished. And the knights him met  
 And him prayèd 'Come again,  
 Sigismund our king, and reign.'  
 But at first—at first they tell  
 How it liked not Malva well ;

She must leave her belted bees  
And the kids that she did rear.  
When she thought on it full dear  
Seemed her home. It did not please  
Sigismund that he must go  
From the wheat that he did sow ;  
When he thought on it his mind  
Was not that should any bind  
Into sheaves that wheat but he,  
Only he ; and yet they went,  
And it may be were content.  
And they won a nation's heart ;  
Very well they played their part.  
They ruled with sceptre and diadem,  
And their children after them.







## THE MAID-MARTYR.

**Q**NLY you 'd have me speak.  
Whether to speak  
Or whether to be silent is all one ;  
Whether to sleep and in my dreaming front  
Her small scared face forlorn ; whether to wake  
And muse upon her small soft feet that paced  
The hated, hard, inhospitable stone—  
I say all 's one. But you would have me speak,  
And change one sorrow for the other. Ay,  
Right reverend father, comfortable father,  
Old, long in thrall, and wearied of the cell,  
So will I here—here staring through the grate,  
Whence, sheer beneath us lying the little town,  
Her street appears a riband up the rise ;  
Where 'tis right steep for carts, behold two ruts  
Worn in the flat, smooth, stone.  
That side I stood ;  
My head was down. At first I did but see  
Her coming feet ; they gleamed through my hot tears

As she walked barefoot up yon short steep hill.  
Then I dared all, gazed on her face, the maid-  
Martyr, and utterly, utterly broke my heart.

Her face, O ! it was wonderful to me,  
There was not in it what I look'd for—no,  
I never saw a maid go to her death,  
How should I dream that face and the dumb soul ?

Her arms and head were bare, seemly she walked  
All in her smock so modest as she might ;  
Upon her shoulders hung a painted cape  
For horrible adornment, flames of fire  
Portrayed upon it, and mocking demon heads.

Her eyes—she did not see me—opened wide,  
Blue-black, gazed right before her, yet they marked  
Nothing ; and her two hands uplift as praying,  
She yet prayed not, wept not, sighed not. O father,  
She was past that, soft, tender, hunted thing ;  
But, as it seemed, confused from time to time,  
She would half-turn her or to left or right  
To follow other streets, doubting her way.

Then their base pikes they basely thrust at her,  
And, like one dazed, obedient to her guides  
She came ; I knew not if 't was present to her  
That death was her near goal ; she was so lost,

And set apart from any power to think.  
But her mouth pouted as one brooding, father,  
Over a lifetime of forlorn fear. No,  
Scarce was it fear ; so looks a timid child  
(Not more affrighted ; ah ! but not so pale)  
That has been scolded or has lost its way.

Mother and father—father and mother kind,  
She was alone, where were you hidden ? Alone,  
And I that loved her more, or feared death less,  
Rushed to her side, but quickly was flung back,  
And cast behind o' the pikemen following her  
Into a yelling and a cursing crowd,  
That bristled thick with monks and hooded friars ;  
Moreover, women with their cheeks ablaze,  
Who swarmèd after up the narrowing street.

Pitiful heaven ! I knew she did not hear  
In that last hour the cursing, nor the foul  
Words ; she had never heard like words, sweet soul,  
In her life blameless ; even at that pass,  
That dreadful pass, I felt it had been worse,  
Though nought I longed for as for death, to know  
She did. She saw not 'neath their hoods those eyes  
Soft, glittering, with a lust for cruelty ;  
Secret delight, that so great cruelty,  
All in the sacred name of Holy Church,  
Their meed to look on it should be anon.

Speak ! O, I tell you this thing passeth words !

From roofs and oriels high, women looked down ;  
Men, maidens, children, and a fierce white sun  
Smote blinding splinters from all spears aslant.

Lo ! next a stand, so please you, certain priests  
(May God forgive men sinning at their ease),  
Whose duty 't was to look upon this thing,  
Being mindful of thick pungent smoke to come,  
Had caused a stand to rise hard by the stake,  
Upon its windward side.

My life ! my love !

She utter'd one sharp cry of mortal dread  
While they did chain her. This thing passeth words,  
Albeit told out for ever in my soul.  
As the torch touched, thick volumes of black reek  
Rolled out and raised the wind, and instantly  
Long films of flaxen hair floated aloft,  
Settled alow, in drifts upon the crowd.  
The vile were merciful ; heaped high, my dear,  
Thou didst not suffer long. O ! it was soon,  
Soon over, and I knew not any more,  
Till grovelling on the ground, beating my head,  
I heard myself, and scarcely knew 't was I,  
At Holy Church railing with fierce mad words,  
Crying and craving for a stake, for me.  
While fast the folk, as ever, such a work

Being over, fled, and shrieked 'A heretic !  
More heretics ; yon ashes smoking still.'  
And up and almost over me came on  
A robed—ecclesiastic—with his train  
(I choose the words lest that they do some wrong),  
Call him a robed ecclesiastic proud.  
And I lying helpless, with my bruised face  
Beat on his garnished shoon. But he stepped back,  
Spurned me full roughly with them, called the pikes,  
Delivering orders, 'Take the bruised wretch.  
He raves. Fool ! thou'lt hear more of this anon.  
Bestow him there.' He pointed to a door.  
With that some threw a cloth upon my face  
Because it bled. I knew they carried me  
Within his home, and I was satisfied ;  
Willing my death. Was it an abbey door ?  
Was 't entrance to a palace ? or a house  
Of priests ? I say not, nor if abbot he,  
Bishop or other dignity ; enough  
That he so spake. 'Take in the bruised wretch.'  
And I was borne far up a turret stair  
Into a peaked chamber taking form  
O' the roof, and on a pallet bed they left  
Me miserable. Yet I knew forsooth,  
Left in my pain, that evil things were said  
Of that same tower ; men thence had disappeared,  
Suspect of heresy had disappeared,  
Deliver'd up, 't was whisper'd, tried and burned.

'So be it' methought, 'I would not live, not I.'  
 But none did question me. A beldame old,  
 Kind, heedless of my sayings, tended me.  
 I raved at Holy Church and she was deaf,  
 And at whose tower detained me, she was dumb.  
 So had I food and water, rest and calm.  
 Then on the third day I rose up and sat  
 On the side of my low bed right melancholy,  
 All that high force of passion overpast,  
 I sick with dolourous thought and weak through tears  
 Spite of myself came to myself again  
 (For I had slept), and since I could not die  
 Looked through the window three parts overgrown  
 With leafage on the loftiest ivy ropes,  
 And saw at foot o' the rise another tower  
 In roof whereof a grating, dreary bare.  
 Lifetimes gone by, long, slow, dim, desolate,  
 I knew even there had been my lost love's cell.

So musing on the man that with his foot  
 Spurned me, the robed ecclesiastic stern,  
 'Would he had haled me straight to prison,' methought,  
 'So made an end at once.'

My sufferings rose  
 Like billows closing over, beating down ;  
 Made heavier far because of a stray, strange,  
 Hope which had mocked me at the last.

'T was thus,

I had come from Oxford secretly, the news  
Terrible of her danger smiting me,—  
She was so young, and ever had been bred  
With whom 't was made a peril now to name.  
There had been worship in the night ; some stole  
To a mean chapel deep in woods, and heard  
Preaching, and prayed. She, my betrothed, was there.  
Father and mother, mother and father kind,  
So young, so innocent, had ye no ruth,  
No fear, that ye did bring her to her doom ?  
I know the chiefest Evil One himself  
Sanded that floor. Their footsteps marking it  
Betrayed them. How all came to pass let be.  
Parted, in hiding some, other in thrall,  
Father and mother, mother and father kind,  
It may be yet ye know not this—not all.

I in the daytime lying perdue had gazed  
At the castle keep impregnable,—no foot  
How rash so e'er might hope to scale it. Night  
Descending, came I near, perplexedness,  
Contempt of danger, to the door o' the keep  
Drawing me. There a short stone bench I found,  
And bitterly weeping sat and leaned my head  
Against the hopeless hated massiveness  
Of that detested hold. A lifting moon  
Had made encroachment on the dark, but deep  
Was shadow where I leaned. Within a while



I was aware, but saw no shape, of one  
Who stood beside me, a dark shadow tall.  
I cared not, disavowal mattered nought  
Of grief to one so out of love with life.  
But after pause I felt a hand let down  
That rested kindly, firmly, a man's hand,  
Upon my shoulder ; there was cheer in it.  
And presently a voice clear, whispering, low,  
With pitifulness that faltered, spoke to me.  
Was I, it asked, true son of Mother Church ?  
Coldly I answer'd ' Ay ; ' then blessed words  
That danced into mine ears more excellent  
Music than wedding bells had been were said,  
With certitude that I might see my maid,  
My dear one. He would give a paper, he  
The man beside me. ' Do thy best endeavour,  
Dear youth. Thy maiden being a right sweet child  
Surely will hearken to thee ; an she do,  
And will recant, fair faultless heretic,  
Whose knowledge is but scant of matters high  
Which hard men spake on with her, hard men forced  
From her mouth innocent, then shall she come  
Before me ; have good cheer, all may be well.  
But an she will not she must burn, no power—  
Not Solomon the Great on's ivory throne  
With all his wisdom could find out a way,  
Nor I nor any to save her, she must burn.  
Now hast thou till day dawn. The Mother of God  
Speed thee.' A twisted scroll he gave ; himself

Knocked at the door behind, and he was gone,  
A darker pillar of darkness in the dark.  
Straightway one opened and I gave the scroll.  
He read, then thrust it in his lanthorn flame  
Till it was ashes ; ' Follow ' and no more  
Whisper'd, went up the giddy spiring way,  
I after, till we reached the topmost door.  
Then took a key, opened, and crying ' Delia,  
Delia my sweetheart, I am come, I am come,'  
I darted forward and he locked us in.  
Two figures ; one rose up and ran to me  
Along the ladder of moonlight on the floor,  
Fell on my neck. Long time we kissed and wept.

But for that other, while she stood appeased  
For cruel parting past, locked in mine arms,  
I had been glad, expecting a good end.  
The cramped pale fellow prisoner ' Courage ' cried.  
Then Delia lifting her fair face, the moon  
Did show me its incomparable calms.  
Her effluent thought needed no word of mine,  
It whelmed my soul as in a sea of tears.  
The warm enchantment leaning on my breast  
Breathed as in air remote, and I was left  
To infinite detachment, even with hers  
To take cold kisses from the lips of doom,  
Look in those eyes and disinherit hope  
From that high place late won.

Then murmuring low  
 That other spake of Him on the cross, and soft  
 As broken-hearted mourning of the dove,  
 She 'One deep calleth to another' sighed.  
 'The heart of Christ mourns to my heart, "Endure.  
 There was a day when to the wilderness  
 My great forerunner from his thrall sent forth  
 Sad messengers, demanding *Art thou He?*  
 Think'st thou I knew no pang in that strange hour?  
 How could I hold the power, and want the will  
 Or want the love? That pang was his--and mine.  
 He said not, Save me an thou be the Son,  
 But only *Art thou He?* In my great way  
 It was not writ,—legions of Angels mine,  
 There was one Angel, one ordain'd to unlock  
 At my behest the doomèd deadly doors.  
 I could not tell him, tell not thee, why." Lord,  
 We know not why, but would not have Thee grieve,  
 Think not so deeply on 't ; make us endure  
 For thy blest sake, hearing thy sweet voice mourn  
 'I will go forth, thy desolations meet,  
 And with my desolations solace them.  
 I will not break thy bonds, but I am bound,  
 With thee.''

I feared. That speech deep furrows cut  
 In my afflicted soul. I whisper'd low,  
 'Thou wilt not heed her words, my golden girl.'  
 But Delia said not ought ; only her hand

Laid on my cheek and on the other leaned  
Her own. O there was comfort, father,  
In love and nearness, e'en at the crack of doom.

Then spake I, and that other said no more,  
For I appealed to God and to his Christ.  
Unto the strait-barred window led my dear ;  
No table, bed, nor plenishing ; no place  
They had for rest : maugre two narrow chairs  
By day, by night they sat thereon upright.  
One drew I to the opening ; on it set  
My Delia, kneeled ; upon its arm laid mine,  
And prayed to God and prayed of her.

Father,

If you should ask e'en now, ' And art thou glad  
Of what befell ? ' I could not say it, father,  
I should be glad ; therefore God make me glad,  
Since we shall die to-morrow !

Think not sin,

O holy, harmless reverend man, to fear.  
'T will be soon over. Now I know thou fear'st  
Also for me, lest I be lost ; but aye  
Strong comfortable hope doth wrap me round,  
A token of acceptance. I am cast  
From Holy Church, and not received of thine ;  
But the great Advocate who knoweth all,  
He whispers with me.

O my Delia wept

When I did plead ; ‘ I have much feared to die,’  
 Answering. (The moonlight on her blue-black eyes  
 Fell ; shining tears upon their lashes hung ;  
 Fair showed the dimple that I loved ; so young,  
 So very young.) ‘ But they did question me  
 Straitly, and make me many times to swear,  
 To swear of all alas, that I believed.  
 Truly, unless my soul I would have bound  
 With false oaths—difficult, innumerable, strong,  
 Way was not left me to get free.

But now,’

Said she, ‘ I am happy ; I have seen the place  
 Where I am going.

I will tell it you,

Love, Hubert. Do not weep ; they said to me  
 That you would come, and it would not be long.  
 Thus was it, being sad and full of fear,  
 I was crying in the night ; and prayed to God  
 And said, “ I have not learned high things ;” and said  
 To the Saviour, “ Do not be displeased with me,  
 I am not crying to get back and dwell  
 With my good mother and my father fond,  
 Nor even with my love, Hubert—my love,  
 Hubert ; but I am crying because I fear  
 Mine answers were not rightly given—so hard  
 Those questions. If I did not understand,  
 Wilt Thou forgive me ?” And the moon went down  
 While I did pray, and looking on the floor,

Behold a little diamond lying there,  
So small it might have dropped from out a ring.  
I could but look ! The diamond waxed—it grew—  
It was a diamond yet, and shot out rays,  
And in the midst of it a rose-red point ;  
It waxed till I might see the rose-red point  
Was a little Angel 'mid those oval rays,  
With a face sweet as the first kiss, O love,  
You gave me, and it meant that self-same thing.

Now was it tall as I, among the rays  
Standing ; I touched not. Through the window drawn,  
This barred and narrow window,—but I know  
Nothing of how, we passed, and seemed to walk  
Upon the air, till on the roof we sat.

It spoke. The sweet mouth did not move, but all  
The Angel spoke in strange words full and old,  
It was my Angel sent to comfort me  
With a message, and the message, "I might come,  
And myself see if He forgave me." Then  
Deliver'd he admonition, "Afterwards  
I must return and die." But I being dazed,  
Confused with love and joy that He so far  
Did condescend, "Ay, Eminence," replied,  
"Is the way great?" I knew not what I said.  
The Angel then, "I know not far nor near,  
But all the stars of God this side it shine."

And I forgetful wholly for this thing  
My soul did pant in, a rapture and a pain,  
So great as they would melt it quite away  
To a vanishing like mist when sultry rays  
Shot from the daystar reckon with it—I  
Said in my simpleness, “But is there time?  
For in three days I am to burn, and O  
I would fain see that He forgiveth first.  
Pray you make haste.” “I know not haste,” he said;  
“I was not fashioned to be thrall of time.  
What is it?” And I marvelled, saw outlying,  
Shaped like a shield and of dimensions like  
An oval in the sky beyond all stars,  
And trembled with foreknowledge. We were bound  
To that same golden holy hollow. I  
Misdoubted how to go, but we were gone.  
I set off wingless, walking empty air  
Beside him. In a moment we were caught  
Among thick swarms of lost ones, evil, fell,  
Of might, only a little less than gods,  
And strong enough to tear the earth to shreds,  
Set shoulders to the sun and rend it out  
O’ its place. Their wings did brush across my face,  
Yet felt I nought; the place was vaster far  
Than all this wholesome pastoral windy world.  
Through it we spinning, pierced to its far brink,  
Saw menacing frowns and we were forth again.  
Time has no instant for the reckoning ought



So sudden ; 't was as if a lightning flash  
 Threw us within it, and a swifter flash,  
 We riding harmless down its swordlike edge,  
 Shot us fast forth to empty nothingness.

All my soul trembled, and my body it seemed  
 Pleaded than such a sight rather to faint  
 To the last silence, and the eery grave  
 Inhabit, and the slow solemnities  
 Of dying faced, content me with my shroud.

And yet was lying athwart the morning star  
 That shone in front, that holy hollow ; yet  
 It loomed, as hung atilt towards the world,  
 That in her time of sleep appeared to look  
 Up to it, into it.

We, though I wept,  
 Fearing and longing, knowing not how to go,  
 My heart gone first, both mine eyes dedicate  
 To its all-hallowed sweet desired gold,  
 We on the empty limitless abyss  
 Walked slowly. It was far ;

And I feared much,  
 For lo ! when I looked down deep under me  
 The little earth was such a little thing,  
 How in the vasty dark find her again ?  
 The crescent moon a moored boat hard by,

Did wait on her and touch her ragged rims  
With a small gift of silver.

Love ! my life !

Hubert, while I yet wept, O we were there.  
A menai of Angels first, a swarm of stars  
Took us among them (all alive with stars  
Shining and shouting each to each that place) ;  
The feathered multitude did lie so thick  
We walked upon them, walked on outspread wings,  
And the great gates were standing open.

Love !

The country is not what you think ; but oh !  
When you have seen it nothing else contents.  
The voice, the vision was not what you think—  
But oh ! it was all. It was the meaning of life,  
Excellent consummation of desires  
For ever, let into the heart with pain  
Most sweet. That smile did take the feeding soul  
Deeper and deeper into heaven. The sward  
(For I had bowed my face on it) I found  
Grew in my spirit's longed-for native land—  
At last I was at home.'

And here she paused :

I must needs weep. I have not been in heaven,  
Therefore she could not tell me what she heard,  
Therefore she might not tell me what she saw,  
Only I understood that One drew near  
Who said to her she should e'en come, ' Because,'

Said He, ' My Father loves Me. I will ask  
He send, a guiding Angel for My sake,  
Since the dark way is long, and rough, and hard,  
So that I shall not lose whom I love—thee.

Other words wonderful of things not known,  
When she had uttered, I gave hope away,  
Cried out, and took her in despairing arms,  
Asking no more. Then while the comfortless  
Dawn till night fainted grew, alas ! a key  
That with abhorrèd jarring probed the door.  
We kissed, we looked, unlocked our arms. She sighed  
' Remember.' ' Ay, I will remember. What ?'  
' To come to me.' Then I, thrust roughly forth—  
I, bereft, dumb, forlorn, unremedied  
My hurt for ever, stumbled blindly down,  
And the great door was shut behind and chained.

The weird pathetic scarlet of day dawning,  
More kin to death of night than birth of morn,  
Peered o'er yon hill bristling with spires of pine.  
I heard the crying of the men condemned,  
Men racked, that should be martyr'd presently,  
And my great grief met theirs with might ; I held  
All our poor earth's despairs in my poor breast,  
The choking reek, the faggots were all mine.  
Ay, and the partings they were all mine—mine.  
Father, it will be very good methinks

To die so, to die soon. It doth appease  
The soul in misery for its fellows, when  
There is no help, to suffer even as they.

Father, when I had lost her, when I sat  
After my sickness on the pallet bed,  
My forehead dropp'd into my hand, behold  
Some one beside me. A man's hand let down  
With that same action kind, compassionate,  
Upon my shoulder. And I took the hand  
Between mine own, laying my face thereon.  
I knew this man for him who spoke with me,  
Letting me see my Delia. I looked up.  
Lo ! lo ! the robed ecclesiastic proud,  
He and this other one. Tell you his name ?  
Am I a fiend ? No, he was good to me,  
Almost he placed his life in my hand.

Father,  
He with good pitying words long talked to me,  
' Did I not strive to save her ? ' ' Ay,' quoth I.  
' But sith it would not be, I also claim  
Death, burning ; let me therefore die—let me.  
I am wicked, would be heretic, but, faith,  
I know not how, and Holy Church I hate.  
She is no mother of mine, she slew my love.'  
What answer ? ' Peace, peace, thou art hard on me.  
Favour I forfeit with the Mother of God,  
Lose rank among the saints, foresee my soul

Drenched in the unmitigated flame, and take  
 My payment in the lives snatched at all risk  
 From battling in it here. O, an thou turn  
 And tear from me, lost to that other world  
 My heart's reward in this, I am twice lost ;  
 Now have I doubly failed.'

Father, I know

The Church would rail, hound forth, disgrace, try, burn,  
 Make his proud name, discover'd, infamy,  
 Tread underfoot his ashes, curse his soul.  
 But God is greater than the Church. I hope  
 He shall not, for that he loved men, lose God.  
 I hope to hear it said 'Thy sins are all  
 Forgiven ; come in, thou hast done well.'

For me

My chronicle comes down to its last page.  
 'Is not life sweet?' quoth he, and comforted  
 My sick heart with good words, 'duty' and 'home.'  
 Then took me at moonsetting down the stair  
 To the dark deserted midway of the street,  
 Gave me a purse of money, and his hand  
 Laid on my shoulder, holding me with words  
 A father might have said, bad me God speed,  
 So pushed me from him, turned, and he was gone.

There was a Pleiad lost ; where is she now ?  
 None knoweth,—O she reigns, it is my creed,  
 Otherwhere dedicate to making day.

The God of Gods, He doubtless looked to that  
Who wasteth never ought He fashionèd.  
I have no vision, but where vision fails  
Faith cheers, and truly, truly there is need,  
The god of this world being so unkind.  
O love ! My girl for ever to the world  
Wanting. Lost, not that any one should find,  
But wasted for the sake of waste, and lost  
For love of man's undoing, of man's tears,  
By envy of the Evil One ; I mourn  
For thee, my golden girl, I mourn, I mourn.

He set me free. And it befell anon  
That I must imitate him. 'Then 't befell  
That on the holy Book I read, and all,  
The mediating Mother and her Babe,  
God and the Church, and man and life and death,  
And the dark gulfs of bitter purging flame,  
Did take on alteration. Like a ship  
Cast from her moorings, drifting from her port,  
Not bound to any land, not sure of land,  
My dull'd soul lost her reckoning on that sea  
She sailed, and yet the voyage was nigh done.

This God was not the God I had known ; this Christ  
Was other. O, a gentler God, a Christ—  
By a mother and a Father infinite—  
In distance each from each made kin to me,

Blest Sufferer on the rood ; but yet, I say  
 Other. Far gentler, and I cannot tell,  
 Father, if you, or she, my golden girl,  
 Or I, or any aright those mysteries read.

I cannot fathom them. There is not time,  
 So quickly men condemned me to this cell.  
 I quarrell not so much with Holy Church  
 For that she taught, as that my love she burned.  
 I die because I hid her enemies,  
 And read the Book.

But O, forgiving God,  
 I do elect to trust Thee. I have thought,  
 What! are there set between us and the sun  
 Millions of miles, and did He like a tent  
 Rear up yon vasty sky? Is heaven less wide?  
 And dwells He there, but for His wingèd host,  
 Almost alone? Truly I think not so ;  
 He has had trouble enough with this poor world  
 To make Him as an earthly father would,  
 Love it and value it more.

He did not give  
 So much to have us with Him, and yet fail.  
 And now He knows I would believe e'en so  
 As pleaseth Him, an there was time to learn  
 Or certitude of heart ; but time fails, time.  
 He knoweth also 't were a piteous thing  
 Not to be sure of my love's welfare—not



To see her happy and good in that new home.  
 Most piteous. I could all forego but this.  
 O let me see her, Lord.

What, also I!

White ashes and a waft of vapour—I  
 To flutter on before the winds. No, no.  
 And yet for ever ay—my flesh shall hiss  
 And I shall hear't. Dreadful, unbearable!  
 Is it to-morrow?

Ay, indeed, indeed,

To-morrow. But my moods are as great waves  
 That rise and break and thunder down on me,  
 And then fall'n back sink low.

I have waked long

And cannot hold my thoughts upon th' event;  
 They slip, they wander forth.

How the dusk grows.

This is the last moonrising we shall see.  
 Methought till morn to pray, and cannot pray.  
 Where is mine Advocate? let Him say all  
 And more was in my mind to say this night,  
 Because to-morrow— Ah! no more of that,

The tale is told. Father, I fain would sleep,  
 Truly my soul is silent unto God.



A VINE-ARBOUR IN THE FAR WEST.

I

‘**L**AURA, my Laura!’ ‘Yes, mother!’ ‘I want you, Laura; come down.’

‘What is it, mother—what, dearest? O your loved face how it pales!

You tremble, alas and alas—you heard bad news from the town?’

‘Only one short half hour to tell it. My poor courage fails—

II

Laura.’ ‘Where’s Ronald?—O anything else but Ronald!’

‘No, no,

Not Ronald, if all beside, my Laura, disaster and tears;  
But you, it is yours to send them away, for you they will go,

One short half hour, and must it decide, it must for the years.

III

Laura, you think of your father sometimes?' 'Some-  
times!' 'Ah, but how?'

'I think—that we need not think, sweet mother—the time  
is not yet,

He is as the wraith of a wraith, and a far-off shadow now  
—But if you have heard he is dead?' 'Not that.'

'Then let me forget.'

IV

'The sun is off the south window, draw back the curtain,  
my child.'

'But tell it, mother.' 'Answer you first what it is that  
you see.'

'The lambs on the mountain slope, and the crevice with  
blue ice piled.'

'Nearer.'—'But, mother!' 'Nearer!' 'My heifer she's  
lowing to me.'

V

'Nearer.' 'Nothing, sweet mother, O yes, for one sits in  
the bower.

Black the clusters hang out from the vine about his snow-  
white head,

And the scarlet leaves, where my Ronald leaned.' 'Only  
one half hour—

Laura'—'O mother, my mother dear, all known though  
nothing said.

## VI

O it breaks my heart, the face dejected that looks not on  
us,  
A beautiful face—I remember now, though long I forgot.  
‘Ay and I loved it. I love him to-day, and to see him  
thus !  
Saying “ I go if she bids it, for work her woe—I will not.”

## VII

There ! weep not, wring not your hands, but think, think  
with your heart and soul.’  
‘ Was he innocent, mother ? If he was, I, sure had been  
told.’  
‘ He said so.’ ‘ Ah, but they do.’ ‘ And I hope—and  
long was his dole,  
And all for the signing a name (if indeed he signed) for  
gold.’

## VIII

‘ To find us again, in the far far West, where hid, we were  
free—  
But if he was innocent—O my heart, it is riven in two,  
If he goes how hard upon him—or stays—how harder on  
me,  
For O my Ronald, my Ronald, my dear,—my best what  
of you !’

-IX

‘Peace ; think, my Laura—I say he will go, there weep  
not so sore.

And the time is come, Ronald knows nothing, your father  
will go,

As the shadow fades from its place will he, and be seen  
no more.’

‘There ’ll be time to think to-morrow, and after, but to-  
day, no.

X

‘I’m going down the garden, mother.’ ‘Laura!’ ‘I’ve  
dried my tears.’

‘O how will this end?’ ‘I know not the end, I can but  
begin.’

‘But what will you say?’ ‘Not “Welcome, father,”  
though long were those years,

But I ’ll say to him, “O my poor father, we wait you, come  
in.”’





## LOVERS AT THE LAKE SIDE.

### I

‘**A**ND you brought him home?’ ‘I did, ay Ronald,  
it rested with me.’

‘Love!’ ‘Yes.’ ‘I would fain you were not  
so calm.’ ‘I cannot weep. No.’

‘What is he like, your poor father?’ ‘He is—like—this  
fallen tree

Prone at our feet, by the still lake taking on rose from  
the glow,

### II

Now scarlet, O look! overcoming the blue both lake and  
sky,

While the waterfalls waver like smoke, then leap in and  
are not.

And shining snow-points of high sierras cast down, there  
they lie.’

‘O Laura —I cannot bear it. Laura! as if I forgot.’

## III

‘No, you remember, and I remember that evening—like  
this

When we come forth from the gloomy Canyon, lo, a  
sinking sun.

And, Ronald, you gave to me your troth ring, I gave my  
troth kiss.’

‘Give me another, I say that this makes no difference,  
none.

## IV

It hurts me keenly. It hurts to the soul that you thought  
it could.’

‘I never thought so, my Ronald, my love, never thought  
you base.

No, but I look for a nobler nobleness, loss understood,  
Accepted, and not that common truth which can hold  
through disgrace.

## V

O! we remember, and how ere that noon through deeps  
of the lake

We floating looked down and the boat’s shadow followed  
on rocks below,

So clear the water. O all pathetic as if for love’s sake  
Our life that is but a fleeting shadow ’t would under us  
show.



## VI

O we remember forget-me-not pale, and white colum-  
bine  
You wreathed for my hair ; because we remember this  
cannot be.  
Ah ! here is your ring—see, I draw it off—it must not  
be mine,  
Put it on, love, if but for the moment and listen to me.

## VII

I look for the best, I look for the most, I look for the  
all  
From you, it consoles this misery of mine, there is you to  
trust.  
O if you can weep, let us weep together, tears may well  
fall  
For that lost sunset and what it promised,—they may,  
they must.

## VIII

Do you say nothing, mine own belovèd, you know what I  
mean,  
And whom.—To her pride and her love from you shall  
such blow be dealt. . . .  
. . . Silence uprisen, is like a presence, it comes us  
between . . .  
As once there was darkness, now is there silence that  
may be felt.

## IX

Ronald, your mother, so gentle, so pure, and you are her best,

'T is she whom I think of, her quiet sweetness, her gracious way.

How could she bear it?'—'Laura!' 'Yes, Ronald.' 'Let that matter rest.'

'You might give your name to my father's child?' 'My father's name. Ay,

## X

Who died before it was soiled.' 'You mutter.' 'Why, love, are you here?'

'Because my mother fled forth to the West, her trouble to hide,

And I was so small, the lone pine forest, and tier upon tier,

Far off Mexican snowy sierras pushed England aside.'

## XI

'And why am I here?' 'But what did you mutter?' 'O pardon, sweet.

Why came I here and—my mother?' 'In truth then I cannot tell.'

'Yet you drew my ring from your finger—see—I kneel at your feet.

Put it on. 'T was for no fault of mine.' 'Love! I knew that full well.'

## XII

‘And yet there be faults that long repented, are aye to  
deplere,  
Wear my ring, Laura, at least till I choose some words I  
can say,  
If indeed any word need be said.’ ‘No ! wait, Ronald,  
no more ;  
What ! is there respite ? Give me a moment to think  
“ nay ” or “ ay,”

## XIII

I know not, but feel there is. O pardon me, pardon me  
—peace ;  
For nought is to say, and the dawn of hope is a solemn  
thing,  
Let us have silence. Take me back, Ronald, full sweet  
is release.’  
‘Laura ! but give me my troth kiss again.’ ‘And give  
me my ring.’





## THE WHITE MOON WASTETH.



THE white moon wasteth,  
And cold morn hasteth  
Athwart the snow,  
The red east burneth  
And the tide turneth,  
And thou must go.

Think not, sad rover,  
Their story all over  
Who come from far—  
Once, in the ages  
Won goodly wages  
Led by a star.

Once, for all duly  
Guidance doth truly  
Shine as of old,  
Opens for me and thee  
Once, opportunity  
Her gates of gold.

Enter, thy star is out,  
Traverse nor faint nor doubt  
Earth's antres wild,  
Thou shalt find good and rest  
As found the Magi blest  
That divine Child.





## AN ARROW-SLIT.



CLOMB full high the belfry tower  
Up to yon arrow-slit, up and away,  
I said ' Let me look on my heart's fair flower  
In the wallèd garden where she doth play.'

My care she knoweth not, no nor the cause,  
White rose, red rose about her hung,  
And I aloft with the doves and the daws,  
They coo and call to their callow young.

Sing, ' O an she were a white rosebud fair  
Dropt, and in danger from passing feet,  
'T is I would render her service tender,  
Upraised on my bosom with reverence meet.'

Playing at the ball, my dearest of all,  
When she grows older how will it be,  
I dwell far away from her thoughts to-day  
That heed not, need not, or mine or me.

Sing, 'O an my love were a fledgeling dove  
That flutters forlorn o' her shallow nest,  
'T is I would render her service tender,  
And carry her, carry her on my breast.'







## WENDOVER.



UPLIFTED and lone, set apart with our love  
On the crest of a soft swelling down,  
Cloud shadows that meet on the grass at our  
feet

Sail on above Wendover town.

Wendover town takes the smile of the sun  
As if yearning and strife were unknown,  
From her red roofs float high neither plaint neither sigh,  
All the weight of the world is our own.

Would that life were more kind and that souls might  
have peace  
As the wide mead from storm and from bale,  
We bring up our own care, but how sweet over there  
And how strange is their calm in the vale.

As if trouble at noon had achieved a deep sleep,  
Lapped and lulled from the weariful fret,  
Or shot down out of day, had a hint dropt away  
As if grief might attain to forget.

Not if we two indeed had gone over the bourne  
And were safe on the hills of the blest,  
Not more strange they might show to us drawn from  
below,  
Come up from long dolour to rest.

But the peace of that vale would be thine, love, and mine,  
And sweeter the air than of yore,  
And this life we have led as a dream that is fled  
Might appear to our thought evermore.

‘Was it life, was it life?’ we might say, ‘’t was scarce life,’  
‘Was it love? ’t was scarce love,’ looking down,  
‘Yet we mind a sweet ray of the red sun one day  
Low lying on Wendover town.’





## THE LOVER PLEADS.

I

**W**HEN I had guineas many a one  
Nought else I lackèd 'neath the sun,  
I had two eyes the bluest seen,  
A perfect shape, a gracious mien,  
I had a voice might charm the bale  
From a two days' widowed nightingale,  
And if you ask how this I know  
I had a love who told me so.

The lover pleads, the maid hearkeneth,  
Her foot turns, his day darkeneth.  
Love unkind, O can it be  
'T was your foot false did turn from me?

The gear is gone, the red gold spent,  
Favour and beauty with them went,  
Eyes take the veil, their shining done,  
Not fair to him is fair to none,  
Sweet as a bee's bag 't was to taste  
His praise. O honey run to waste,  
He loved not ! spoiled is all my way  
In the spoiling of that yesterday.

The shadows wax, the low light alters,  
Gold west fades, and false heart falters.  
The pity of it !--I, love's a rover,  
The last word said, and all over.





## SONG IN THREE PARTS.



THE white broom flatt'ring her flowers in calm  
June weather,  
    ' O most sweet wear ;  
Forty-eight weeks of my life do none desire me,  
    Four am I fair.'

Quoth the brown bee,  
    ' In thy white wear  
Four thou art fair.  
A mystery  
Of honeyed snow  
In scented air  
The bee lines flow  
Straight unto thee.  
Great boon and bliss  
All pure I wis,  
And sweet to grow  
Ay, so to give  
'That many live.

Now as for me,  
I, ' quoth the bee,  
' Have not to give,  
Through long hours sunny  
Gathering I live :  
Aye debonair  
Sailing sweet air  
After my fare,  
Bee-bread and honey  
In thy deep coombe  
O thou white broom,  
Where no leaves shake,  
Brake,  
Bent nor clover,  
I a glad rover  
Thy calms partake,  
While winds of might  
From height to height  
Go bodily over.  
Till slanteth light,  
And up the rise  
Thy shadow lies,  
A shadow of white,  
A beauty-lender  
Pathetic, tender.

Short is thy day ?  
Answer with " Nay,"

Longer the hours  
 That wear thy flowers  
 Than all dull, cold  
 Years manifold  
 That gift withhold.  
 A long liver,  
 O honey-giver,  
 Thou by all showing  
 Art made, bestowing,  
 I envy not  
 Thy greater lot,  
 Nor thy white wear.  
 But, as for me,  
 I, ' quoth the bee,  
 ' Never am fair.'

## II

The nightingale lorn of his note in darkness brooding  
 Deeply and long,  
 'Two sweet months spake the heart to the heart. Alas!  
 all's over,  
 O lost my song.'

One in the tree,  
 'Hush now! Let be :  
 The song at ending  
 Left my long tending



Over alsò.  
Let be, let us go  
Across the wan sea.  
The little ones care not,  
And I fare not  
Amiss with thee.

Thou hast sung all,  
This hast thou had.  
Love, be not sad ;  
It shall befall  
Assuredly,  
When the bush buddeth  
And the bank studdeth—  
Where grass is sweet  
And damps do fleet,  
Her delicate beds  
With daisy heads  
That the Stars Seven .  
Leaned down from heaven  
Shall sparkling mark  
In the warm dark  
Thy most dear strain  
Which ringeth aye true—  
Piercing vale, croft  
Lifted aloft  
Dropt even as dew  
With a sweet quest  
To her on the nest

When damps we love  
 Fall from above.  
 " Art thou asleep ?  
 Answer me, answer me,  
 Night is so deep  
 Thy right fair form  
 I cannot see ;  
 Answer me, answer me,  
 Are the eggs warm ?  
 Is 't well with thee ? "

Ay, this shall be  
 Assuredly.  
 Ay, thou full fain  
 In the soft rain  
 Shalt sing again.'

## III

A fair wife making her moan, despised, forsaken,  
 Her good days o'er ;  
 ' Seven sweet years of my life did I live belovèd,  
 Seven—no more.'

Then Echo woke—and spoke  
 ' No more—no more,'  
 And a wave broke  
 On the sad shore

When Echo said  
    ' No more.'  
Nought else made reply,  
Nor land, nor loch, nor sky  
Did any comfort try,  
But the wave spread  
Echo's faint tone  
Alone,  
All down the desolate shore,  
' No more—no more.'





‘IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM.’



UT of the melancholy that is made  
Of ebbing sorrow that too slowly ebbs,  
Comes back a sighing whisper of the reed,  
A note in new love-pipings on the bough,  
Grieving with grief till all the full-fed air  
And shaken milky corn doth wot of it,  
The pity of it trembling in the talk  
Of the beforetime merrymaking brook—  
Out of that melancholy will the soul,  
In proof that life is not forsaken quite  
Of the old trick and glamour which made glad,  
Be cheated some good day and not perceive  
How sorrow ebbing out is gone from view,  
How tired trouble fall'n for once on sleep,  
How keen self-mockery that youth's eager dream  
Interpreted to mean so much is found  
To mean and give so little—frets no more,  
Floating apart as on a cloud—O then

Not e'en so much as murmuring 'Let this end,'  
 She will, no longer weighted, find escape,  
 Lift up herself as if on wings and flit  
 Back to the morning time.

'O once with me

It was all one, such joy I had at heart,  
 As I heard sing the morning star, or God  
 Did hold me with an Everlasting Hand,  
 And dip me in the day.

O once with me,'

Reflecting 't was enough to live, to look  
 Wonder and love. Now let that come again.  
 Rise!' And ariseth first a tanglement  
 Of flowering bushes, peonies pale that drop  
 Upon a mossy lawn, rich iris spikes,  
 Bee-borage, mealy-stemmed auricula,  
 Brown wallflower, and the sweetbriar ever sweet  
 Her pink buds pouting from their green.

To these

Add thick espaliers where the bullfinch came  
 To strew much budding wealth, and was not chid.  
 Then add wide pear trees on the warmèd wall,  
 The old red wall one cannot see beyond.  
 That is the garden.

In the wall a door

Green, blistered with the sun. You open it,  
 And lo! a sunny waste of tumbled hills  
 And a glad silence, and an open calm.

Infinite leisure, and a slope where rills  
Dance down delightedly, in every crease,  
And lambs stoop drinking and the finches dip.  
Then shining waves upon a lonely beach.  
That is the world.

An all-sufficient world,  
And as it seems an undiscovered world,  
So very few the folk that come to look.  
Yet one has heard of towns ; but they are far.  
The world is undiscovered, and the child  
Is undiscovered that with stealthy joy  
Goes gathering like a bee who in dark cells  
Hideth sweet food to live on in the cold.  
What matters to the child ?—it matters not  
More than it mattered to the moons of Mars,  
That they for ages undiscovered went  
Marked not of man, attendant on their king.

A shallow line of sand curved to the cliff,  
There dwelt the fisherfolk, and there inland  
Some scattered cottagers in thrift and calm.  
Their talk full oft was of old days,—for here  
Was once a fosse, and by this rock-hewn path  
Our wild fore-elders as 't is said would come  
To gather jetsam from some Viking wreck,  
Like a sea-beast wide breasted (her snake head  
Reared up as staring while she rocked ashore)  
That split, and all her ribs were on their fires

The red whereof at their wives' throats made bright  
 Gold gauds which from the weed they picked ere yet  
 The tide had turned.

'Many,' methought, 'and rich  
 They must have been, so long their chronicle.  
 Perhaps the world was fuller then of folk,  
 For ships at sea are few that near us now.'

Yet sometimes when the clouds were torn to rags,  
 Flying black before a gale, we saw one rock  
 In the offing, and the mariner folk would cry,  
 'Look how she labours; those aboard may hear  
 Her timbers creak e'en as she 'd break her heart.'

'T was then the grey gulls blown ashore would light  
 In flocks, and pace the lawn with flat cold feet.

And so the world was sweet, and it was strange,  
 Sweet as a bee-kiss to the crocus flower,  
 Surprising, fresh, direct, but ever one.  
 The laughter of glad music did not yet  
 In its echo yearn, as hinting ought beyond,  
 Nor pathos tremble at the edge of bliss  
 Like a moon halo in a watery sky,  
 Nor the sweet pain alike of love and fear  
 In a world not comprehended touch the heart—  
 The poetry of life was not yet born.



'T was a thing hidden yet that there be days  
When some are known to feel 'God is about,'  
As if that morn more than another morn  
Virtue flowed forth from Him, the rolling world  
Swam in a soothèd calm made resonant  
And vital, swam as in the lap of God  
Come down ; until she slept and had a dream  
(Because it was too much to bear awake),  
That all the air shook with the might of Him  
And whispered how she was the favourite world  
That day, and bade her drink His essence in.

'T is on such days that seers prophesy  
And poets sing, and many who are wise  
Find out for man's wellbeing hidden things  
Whereof the hint came in that Presence known  
Yet unknown. But a seer—what is he?  
A poet is a name of long ago.

Men love the largeness of the field—the wild  
Quiet that soothes the moor. In other days  
They loved the shadow of the city wall,  
In its stone ramparts read their poetry ;  
Safety and state, gold, and the arts of peace,  
Law-giving, leisure, knowledge, all were there.

This to excuse a child's allegiance and  
A spirit's recurrence to the older way.

Orphan'd, with aged guardians kind and true,  
 Things came to pass not told before to me.

Thus, we did journey once when eve was near.  
 Through carriage windows I beheld the moors,  
 Then, churches, hamlets cresting of low hills.  
 The way was long, at last I, fall'n asleep,  
 Awoke to hear a rattling 'neath the wheels  
 And see the lamps alight. This was the town.

Then a wide inn received us, and full soon  
 Came supper, kisses, bed.

The lamp without

Shone in ; the door was shut, and I alone.  
 An ecstasy of exultation took  
 My soul, for there were voices heard and steps,  
 I was among so many,—none of them  
 Knew I was come !

I rose, with small bare feet,  
 Across the carpet stole, a white-robed child,  
 And through the window peered. Behold the town.

There had been rain, the pavement glistened yet  
 In a soft lamplight down the narrow street ;  
 The church was nigh at hand, a clear-toned clock  
 Chimed slowly, open shops across the way  
 Showed store of fruit, and store of bread,— and one  
 Many caged birds. About were customers,

I saw them bargain, and a rich high voice  
Was heard,—a woman sang, her little babe  
Slept 'neath her shawl, and by her side a boy  
Added wild notes and sweet to hers.

Some passed

Who gave her money. It was far from me  
To pity her, she was a part of that  
Admirèd town. E'en so within the shop  
A rosy girl, it may be ten years old,  
Quaint, grave. She helped her mother, deftly weighed  
The purple plums, black mulberries rich and ripe  
For boyish customers, and counted pence  
And dropped them in an apron that she wore.  
Methought a queen had ne'er so grand a lot,  
She knew it, she looked up at me, and smiled.

But yet the song went on, and in a while  
The meaning came ; the town was not enough  
To satisfy that singer, for a sigh  
With her wild music came. What wanted she ?  
Whate'er she wanted wanted all. O how  
'T was poignant, her rich voice ; not like a bird's.  
Could she not dwell content and let them be,  
That they might take their pleasure in the town,  
For—no, she was not poor, witness the pence.

I saw her boy and that small saleswoman ;  
He wary, she with grave persuasive air,

Till he came forth with filberts in his cap,  
And joined his mother, happy, triumphing.

This was the town ; and if you ask what else,  
I say good sooth that it was poetry  
Because it was the all, and something more,—  
It was the life of man, it was the world  
That made addition to the watching heart,  
First conscious its own beating, first aware  
How, beating it kept time with all the race ;  
Nay, 't was a consciousness far down and dim  
Of a Great Father watching too.

But lo ! the rich lamenting voice again ;  
She sang not for herself ; it was a song  
For me, for I had seen the town and knew,  
Yearning I knew the town was not enough.

What more ? To-day looks back on yesterday,  
Life's yesterday, the waiting time, the dawn,  
And reads a meaning into it, unknown  
When it was with us.

It is always so.

But when as ofttimes I remember me  
Of the warm wind that moved the beggar's hair,  
Of the wet pavement, and the lamps alit,  
I know it was not pity that made yearn  
My heart for her, and that same dimpled boy.  
How grand methought to be abroad so late,

And barefoot dabble in the shining wet ;  
How fine to peer as other urchins did  
At those pent huddled doves they let not rest ;  
No, it was almost envy. Ay, how sweet  
The clash of bells ; they rang to boast that far  
That cheerful street was from the cold sea-fog,  
From dark ploughed field and narrow lonesome lane.  
How sweet to hear the hum of voices kind,  
To see the coach come up with din of horn,  
Quick tramp of horses, mark the passers-by  
Greet one another, and go on.

But now

They closed the shops, the wild clear voice was still,  
The beggars moved away—where was their home ?  
The coach which came from out dull darksome fells  
Into the light, passed to the dark again  
Like some old comet which knows well her way,  
Whirled to the sun that as her fateful loop  
She turns, forebodes the destined silences.  
Yes, it was gone ; the clattering coach was gone,  
And those it bore I pitied even to tears,  
Because they must go forth, nor see the lights,  
Nor hear the chiming bells.

In after days,

Remembering of the childish envy and  
The childish pity, it has cheered my heart  
To think e'en now pity and envy both  
It may be are misplaced, or needed not.

Heaven may look down in pity on some soul  
Half envied, on some wholly pitied smile,  
For that it hath to wait as it were an hour  
To see the lights that go not out by night,  
To walk the golden street and hear a song ;  
Other-world poetry that is the all  
And something more.





NATURE, FOR NATURE'S SAKE.

**W**HITE as white butterflies that each one dons  
Her face their wide white wings to shade  
withal,  
Many moon-daisies throug the water-spring,  
While couched in rising barley titlarks call,  
And bees alit upon their martagons  
Do hang a-murmuring, a-murmuring.

They chide, it may be, alien tribes that flew  
And rifled their best blossom, counted on  
And dreamed on in the hive ere dangerous dew  
That clogs bee-wings had dried ; but when outshone  
Long shafts of gold (made all for them) of power  
To charm it away, those thieves had sucked the flower.

Now must they go ; a-murmuring they go,  
And little thrushes twitter in the nest ;  
The world is made for them, and even so  
The clouds are ; they have seen no stars, the breast  
Of their soft mother hid them all the night,  
Till her mate came to her in red dawn-light.



Eggs scribbled over with strange writing, signs,  
Prophecies, and their meaning (for you see  
The yolk within) is life, 'neath yonder bines  
Lie among sedges ; on a hawthorn tree  
The slender lord and master perched hard by,  
Scolds at all comers if they step too nigh.

And our small river makes encompassment  
Of half the mead and holm : yon lime trees grow  
All heeling over to it, diligent  
To cast green doubles of themselves below,  
But shafts of sunshine reach its shallow floor  
And warm the yellow sand it ripples o'er.

Ripples and ripples to a pool it made  
Turning. The cows are there, one creamy white—  
She should be painted with no touch of shade  
If any list to limn her—she the light  
Above, about her, treads out circles wide,  
And sparkling water flashes from her side.

The clouds have all retired to so great height  
As earth could have no dealing with them more  
As they were lost, for all her drawing and might,  
And must be left behind ; but down the shore  
Lie lovelier clouds in ranks of lace-work frail,  
Wild parsley with a myriad florets pale,

Another milky-way, more intricate  
And multitudinous, with every star  
Perfect. Long changeful sunbeams undulate  
Amid the stems where sparklike creatures are  
That hover and hum for gladness, then the last  
Tree rears her graceful head, the shade is passed.

And idle fish in warm wellbeing lie  
Each with his shadow under, while at ease  
As clouds that keep their shape the darting fry  
Turn and are gone in company ; o'er these  
Strangers to them, strangers to us, from holes  
Scooped in the bank peer out shy water-voles.

Here, take for life and fly with innocent feet  
The brown-eyed fawns, from moving shadows clear ;  
There, down the lane with multitudinous bleat  
Plaining on shepherd lads a flock draws near ;  
A mild lamenting fills the morning air,  
'Why to yon upland fold must we needs fare ?'

These might be fabulous creatures every one,  
And this their world might be some other sphere  
We had but heard of, for all said or done  
To know of them,—of what this many a year  
They may have thought of man, or of his sway,  
Or even if they have a God and pray.

The sweetest river bank can never more  
Home to its source tempt back the lapsèd stream,  
Nor memory reach the ante-natal shore,  
Nor one awake behold a sleeper's dream,  
Not easier 't were that unbridged chasm to walk,  
And share the strange lore of their wordless talk.

Like to a poet voice, remote from ken,  
That unregarded sings and undesired,  
Like to a star unnamed by lips of men,  
That faints at dawn in saffron light retired,  
Like to an echo in some desert deep  
From age to age unwakened from its sleep,—

So falls unmarked that other world's great song,  
And lapsing wastes without interpreter.  
Slave world ! not man's to raise, yet man's to wrong,  
He cannot to a loftier place prefer,  
But he can,—all its earlier rights forgot,  
Reign reckless if its nations rue their lot ;

If they can sin or feel life's wear and fret,  
All men had loved them better, it may be  
We had discovered. But who e'er did yet,  
After the sage saints in their clemency,  
Ponder in hope they had a heaven to win,  
Or make a prayer with a dove's name therein ?

As grave Augustine pleading in his day,  
    ' Have pity, Lord, upon the unfledged bird,  
Lest such as pass do trample it in the way,  
    Not marking, or not minding ; give the word,  
O bid an angel in the nest again  
To place it, lest the mother's love be vain.

And let it live, Lord God, till it can fly.'  
    This man dwelt yearning, fain to guess, to spell  
The parable ; all work of God Most High  
    Took to his man's heart. Surely this was well ;  
To love is more than to be loved, by leave  
Of Heaven, to give is more than to receive.

He made it so that said it. As for us  
    Strange is their case toward us, for they give  
And we receive. Made martyrs ever thus  
    In deed but not in will, for us they live,  
For us they die, we quench their little day,  
Remaining blameless, and they pass away.

The world is better served than it is ruled,  
    And not alone of them, for ever more  
Ruleth the man, the woman serveth fooled  
    Full oft of love, not knowing his yoke is sore.  
Life's greatest Son nought from life's measure swerved,  
He was among us ' as a man that served.'

Have they another life, and was it won  
    In the sore travail of another death,  
Which loosed the manacles from our race undone  
    And plucked the pang from dying? If this breath  
Be not their all, reproach no more debarred,  
'O unkind lords, you made our bondage hard,'

May be their plaint when we shall meet again  
    And make our peace with them; the sea of life  
Find flowing, full, nor ought or lost or vain.  
    Shall the vague hint whereof all thought is rife,  
The sweet pathetic guess indeed come true,  
And things restored reach that great residue?

Shall we behold fair flights of phantom doves,  
    Shall furrèd creatures couch in moly flowers,  
Swan souls the rivers oar with their world-loves,  
    In difference welcome as these souls of ours?  
Yet soul of man from soul of man far more  
May differ, even as thought did heretofore

That ranged and varied on th' undying gleam:  
    From a pure breath of God aspiring, high,  
Serving and reigning, to the tender dream,  
    The wingèd Psyche and her butterfly—  
From thrones and powers, to—fresh from death alarms  
Child spirits entering in an angel's arms.

Why must we think, begun in paradise,  
That their long line, cut off with severance fell,  
Shall end in nothingness—the sacrifice  
Of their long service in a passing knell?  
Could man be wholly blest if not to say  
'Forgive'—nor make amends for ever and aye?

Waste, waste on earth, and waste of God afar.  
Celestial flotsam, blazing spars on high,  
Drifts in the meteor month from some wrecked star,  
Strew oft th' unwrinkled ocean of the sky,  
And pass no more accounted of than be  
Long dulses limp that stripe a mundane sea.

The sun his kingdom fills with light, but all  
Save where it strikes some planet and her moons  
Across cold chartless gulfs ordained to fall,  
Void antres, reckoneth no man's nights or noons,  
But feeling forth as for some outmost shore,  
Faints in the blank of doom, and is no more.

God scattereth His abundance as forgot,  
And what then doth He gather? If we know,  
'Tis that One told us it was life. 'For not  
A sparrow,' quoth He, uttering long ago  
The strangest words that e'er took earthly sound,  
'Without your Father falleth to the ground.'



## PERDITA.

**I** *GO beyond the commandment.* So be it. Then  
mine be the blame,  
The loss, the lack, the yearning, till life's last  
sand be run,—

I go beyond the commandment, yet Honour stands fast  
with her claim,  
And what I have rued I shall rue ; for what I have done  
—I have done.

Hush, hush! for what of the future ; you cannot the base  
exalt,  
There is no bridging a chasm over, that yawns with so  
sheer incline ;  
I will not any sweet daughter's cheek should pale for this  
mother's fault,  
Nor son take leave to lower his life a-thinking on mine.



' *Will I tell you all?* ' So ! this, e'en this, will I do for  
your great love's sake ;

Think what it costs. ' *Then let there be silence—silence  
you 'll count consent.* '

No, and no, and for ever no : rather to cross and to break,  
And to lower your passion I speak—that other it was I  
meant.

That other I meant (but I know not how) to speak of,  
nor April days,

Nor a man's sweet voice that pleaded—O (but I promised  
this)—

He never talked of marriage, never ; I grant him that  
praise ;

And he bent his stately head, and I lost, and he won  
with a kiss.

He led me away—O, how poignant sweet the nightin-  
gale's note that noon—

I beheld, and each crispèd spire of grass to him for my  
sake was fair,

And warm winds flattered my soul, blowing straight from  
the soul of June,

And a lovely lie was spread on the fields, but the blue  
was bare.

When I looked up, he said : ' Love, fair love ! O rather  
look in these eyes  
With thine far sweeter than eyes of Eve when she stepped  
the valley unshod'—  
For ONE might be looking through it, he thought, and he  
would not in any wise  
I should mark it open, limitless, empty, bare 'neath the  
gaze of God.

Ah me ! I was happy—yes, I was ; 't is fit you should  
know it all,  
While love was warm and tender and yearning, the rough  
winds troubled me not ;  
I heard them moan without in the forest ; heard the  
chill rains fall—  
But I thought my place was sheltered with him—I forgot,  
I forgot.

After came news of a wife ; I think he was glad I should  
know,  
To stay my pleading, ' take me to church and give me  
my ring ;'  
' You should have spoken before,' he had sighed, when I  
prayed him so,  
For his heart was sick for himself and me, and this bitter  
thing.

But my dream was over me still,—I was half beguiled,  
And he in his kindness left me seldom, O seldom,  
    alone,  
And yet love waxed cold, and I saw the face of my little  
    child,  
And then at the last I knew what I was, and what I had  
    done.

‘ You will give me the name of wife. You will give me a  
    ring.’—O peace !  
You are not let to ruin your life because I ruined  
    mine ;  
You will go to your people at home. There will be rest  
    and release ;  
The bitter now will be sweet full soon—ay, and denial  
    divine.

But spare me the ending. I did not wait to be quite  
    cast away ;  
I left him asleep, and the bare sun rising shone red on  
    my gown.  
There was dust in the lane, I remember ; prints of feet in  
    it lay,  
And honeysuckle trailed in the path that led on to the  
    down.

I was going nowhere—I wandered up, then turned and  
dared to look back,  
Where low in the valley he careless and quiet—quiet  
and careless slept.  
'*Did I love him yet?*' I loved him. Ay, my heart on the  
upland track  
Cried to him, sighed to him out by the wheat, as I  
walked, and I wept.

I knew of another alas, one that had been in my place,  
Her little ones, she forsaken, were almost in need ;  
I went to her, and carried my babe, then all in my satins  
and lace  
I sank at the step of her desolate door, a mourner  
indeed.

I cried, 'Tis the way of the world, would I had never  
been born !'  
'Ay, 'tis the way of the world, but have you no sense  
to see  
For all the way of the world,' she answers and laughs me  
to scorn,  
'The world is made the world that it is by fools like  
you, like me?'

Right hard upon me, hard on herself, and cold as the  
cold stone,  
But she took me in ; and while I lay sick I knew I was  
lost,  
Lost with the man I loved, or lost without him, making  
my moan  
Blighted and rent of the bitter frost, wrecked, tempest  
tossed, lost, lost !

How am I fallen :—we that might make of the world what  
we would,  
Some of us sink in deep waters. Ah ! ‘*you would raise  
me again ?*’  
No, true heart,—you cannot, you cannot, and all in my  
soul that is good  
Cries out against such a wrong. Let be, your quest is for  
ever in vain.

For I feel with another heart, I think with another  
mind,  
I have worsened life, I have wronged the world, I have  
lowered the light ;  
But as for him, his words and his ways were after his  
kind,  
He did but spoil where he could, and waste where he  
might.

For he was let to do it ; I let him and left his soul  
 To walk mid the ruins he made of home in remem-  
 brance of love's despairs,  
 Despairs that harden the hearts of men and shadow their  
 heads with dole,  
 And woman's fault, though never on earth, may be  
 healed,—but what of theirs ?

'T was fit you should hear it all—What, tears ? they com-  
 fort me ; now you will go,  
 Nor wrong your life for the nought you call 'a pair of  
 beautiful eyes,'  
 '*I will not say I love you.*' Truly I will not, no.  
 '*Will I pity you ?*' Ay, but the pang will be short, you  
 shall wake and be wise.

'*Shall we meet ?*' We shall meet on the other side, but  
 not before.  
 I shall be pure and fair, I shall hear the sound of THE  
 NAME,  
 And see the form of His face. You too will walk on that  
 shore,  
 In the garden of the Lord God, where neither is sorrow  
 nor shame.

Farewell, I shall bide alone, for God took my one white  
lamb,

I work for such as she was, and I will the while I last,  
But there's no beginning again, ever I am what I am,  
And nothing, nothing, nothing, can do away with the  
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